Shelter for Homeless Queer Youths Opens at the Church

The Query

NEWSLETTER

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

September 2002

A long-sought dream became reality on June 16th when the **Ali Forney Center for Homeless LGBT Youth** opened its doors at Metropolitan Community Church of New York. Every night of the week, from 8 p.m. until 8 a.m., the church's social hall becomes a shelter where homeless queer youths can find a safe place to shower and sleep, and be assisted in getting the social services they need to move from surviving to thriving. While the shelter seeks to help and counsel all who enter, by law its cots can sleep no more than **six youths** a night at the present time.

Incredibly, this is the only shelter in the city specifically serving LGBT youth, the most vulnerable yet often-ignored segment of the queer community. Because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, many of these young people have been forced out of their homes by cruel, bigoted parents, only to encounter in the streets homophobic or transphobic violence and despair.

The Ali Forney Center has a professional full-time staff of two. At the Opening Ceremony in the church's sanctuary on June 16th, its executive director, **Carl Siciliano**, spoke movingly about the life and death of Ali Forney, for whom the shelter is named. Ali, Carl explained, was a gifted and remarkable queer youth, whose tragic hate-crime murder devastated all who knew Ali. Richard Haymes, executive director of the Anti-Violence Project, and Noah Pfefferblit, director of community affairs for Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, also spoke. After the prayers, hymns, blessings and speeches, the ceremony concluded with young people vogueing in the aisle.

MCCNY's Pastor, **Rev. Pat Bumgardner**, said at the ceremony that the church has struggled for years to find a way to open such a shelter. One of the prime goals of the **Capital Campaign** for a bigger church building has been to have the room and resources to do this. But, Rev. Pat stated, MCCNY could not wait for a new building: "We had to act now" to address this desperate need. Rev. Pat recalled that opening the homeless queer youth shelter was one of the late **Sylvia Rivera's** most cherished wishes. As she lay on her hospital deathbed, Sylvia prodded Rev. Pat, "Are you going to do it?" and rejoiced when the answer was "Yes."

The Ali Forney Center is one more instance of MCCNY providing a unique service to the LGBT community and answering the call to make God's love tangible in this city — while the limitation of six people per night underscores the need for a new building with a bigger shelter. *Now it is up to generous donors and anonymous philanthropists to support MCCNY, its good works and its Capital Campaign: Remember the homeless LGBT youths and give now. God will bless you.*

Homecoming Sunday September 15th

Don't miss it: Morning Choir returns, Brunch after Worship.
Evening treats too.
And look for MCCNY's *Activities/Religious Ed calendars* for the season, with new events, series & classes every week.
Homecoming Weekend Dance for ALL, Sat. Sept. 14, 8 p.m.
(hosted by men's group)

Report from MCC's Christians of African Descent Conference

MCCNY's goal as a community of faith was that anyone of African descent from this church who wanted to attend the MCC denomination's 3rd Christians of African Descent (CAD) conference in Atlanta be able to do so, and due to the generosity of our church family we achieved that goal. MCCNY's delegation of Christians of African Descent, and a few partners and friends of non-African descent, was the largest number representing any one church at the conference. Here is a first-hand report from **Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini**:

"Pressing On"

For three days in April fourteen members and friends of MCCNY journeyed to Atlanta, Georgia to join approximately 150 MCC'ers of African descent from the U.S., the U.K. and Africa for a MCC mini-conference convened specifically by and for MCC'ers of African descent. The 3rd such mini-conference in six years, this well-organized event was chaired by **Rev. Wanda Floyd** of Imani MCC, Durham NC and carried on the tradition initiated by **Rev. Elder Darlene Garner** over six years ago of a gathering dedicated to the fellowship, needs and worship styles of MCC'ers of African descent. Eleven "Christians of African Descent" from MCCNY, including CAD's chair **Carolyn Parker** and her partner **Gayle Davis** and Vice-Chair **Jay Hayden**, made the trek along with three friends/allies of non-African descent. The only church to commit to and follow through with the goal of making it possible for all persons of African descent in their community of faith to attend, MCCNY put our "money where our hearts are" and generous contributions toward scholarships were made available - thanks to all who gave! Of this remarkable event, Carolyn Parker noted that it *"renewed her faith"* as it brought her great joy to gather with siblings from far and wide in conversation and worship. **Barry Blackstone** wrote that *"the Spirit was everywhere"* —- including MCCNY as we live our pledge to honor diversity. Folks of non-African descent in attendance included Deacon Buddy Seaton and Denise Janssen who renewed their commitment to making MCC - New York and beyond - a place which is truly filled with ALL God's peoples. The next mini-conference will be in 2004 and a Persons of Non-African Descent Organizing Against Racism Summit is tentatively being organized as a parallel event; see Rev.Kristen if you are interested.

Carolyn Parker, CSW, (pictured in group at left) has been elected Chair of MCCNY's Christians of African Descent ministry. Her spouse is Gayle Davis, Esq., a member of MCCNY's Board of Directors.

People & Events in the News

BRUCE LEVITT generously donated the beautiful new floor tiles (with a cross as the centerpiece) that welcome everyone entering the church foyer...

MOSHAY MOSES was honored with an award from **Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields** at the Borough President's annual Pride Month Celebration...

BALI WHITE, a member of MCCNY's **GenderPeople**, was honored with an award at New York City's annual Black Pride celebration this summer…

BOB HOLLINGER treated people in two of the church ministries dear to his heart to pool parties and barbecues at his estate on Long Island last month. One Saturday it was the **40+ ministry** that enjoyed his hospitality and the following week the **men's group** were his honored guests…

For the men's group, coordinated by **STEVEN RODICK**, the party at Bob's house capped off a busy season that began when 25 of its members got a block of seats (acquired by **MARK MCNEASE**) at Carnegie Hall for the Gay Men's Chorus Pride concert featuring Armistead Maupin...

JOHN MAZZOLA is the coordinator of the church's video ministry. John and **CHERYL TUCKER** operate the cameras in the sanctuary during Worship Services every Sunday morning. The video tape they record is then carefully edited by John Mazzola on his computer to a one-hour length and televised the following week to all of the more than quarter-million cable TV households throughout Manhattan *(Sundays at 8:30 a.m. on Time Warner channel 57 and RCN channel 110)*. July marked the **7th anniversary of MCCNY's debut on Manhattan Cable**. The video ministry hopes to make the broadcast available in Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx in the foreseeable future. John Mazzola also coordinates the audio ministry, which provides audio tapes of each Sunday sermon (for $3) to those who request them. (Volunteers are always needed for the video ministry. Contact Rev. Kristen at the church, 212 629-7440 ext. 11)…

In a break with tradition, Music Director **JOHN FISCHER** kept the **evening choir** going strong all through the hot summer. At the morning Service, perhaps a new summer music tradition was born as the congregation sang and clapped along each week with **ANDY BUCK & RICK LIBERT**, a popular duo at folk music clubs and festivals around town…

Rev. Dr. PENNY NIXON, senior Pastor of MCC San Francisco and a leading figure in the quest for social justice in that city, was guest preacher at MCCNY on August 4th…

BOB WOLFF has been hospitalized in Vermont. Bob was a longtime **Board Member** at MCCNY before moving to Vermont in Oct. 2001. He designed, created and installed the classic backdrop behind the altar in the sanctuary (**ABBY TURNER** then painted it). Bob also created the pulpit from which the Sunday sermons are preached. He is responsible for the black hymnals found underneath the pew in front of you in church. And, Bob acquired and installed the signboard on the exterior front wall of the church that informs passers-by of the weekly schedule of Worship Services and special events. Even after moving to Vermont, he continued spreading the good news about MCCNY in a letter published in the *Advocate* national newsmagazine…

REV. KERRI MESSNER was commissioned to go forth and plant a new MCC church in Vancouver, British Columbia, in her native Canada…

Members of **MCCNY's women's group** were among the enthusiastic participants in the recent **Lesbians for Liberty** kiss-in at Madison Square Garden that got a few bigoted sportswriters so riled up. The women's group resumes basketball games of its own after Homecoming Sunday.

HARD TIMES PROMPT PLEA FOR GREATER GENEROSITY: Like most non-profit organizations in NYC, MCCNY has been hit hard by the economic downtown following the Sept. 11th terrorist attacks and the stock market slump. To overcome the resulting budget deficit, MCCNY's Board of Directors has appealed to donors to *increase giving to the church by at least 35%*.

ANNIVERSARY PARTY OCT. 27th: MCCNY will celebrate the 9th anniversary of the October 1993 move into the present church

building on West 36th Street (which made MCCNY the first LGBT religious or spiritual organization in NYC to own its own home) with a party in the social hall after the evening Worship Service on Sunday, Oct. 27th. In keeping with the Halloween season, this will be a festive drag ball. There will be a DJ and the Imperial Court of NY will be in attendance.

2 ALL-CHURCH RETREATS PLANNED: MCCNY will hold not one but two all-church retreats in the coming months. Exact dates will be announced soon. All members and friends are welcome. For details, contact Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini at the church office (212 629-7440).

REMEMBERING SEPT. 11th: MCCNY will be holding **a special Service on Wed., Sept, 11th, at 7 p.m.** in the sanctuary. The church continues to make available **professional counselors** for people traumatized by the anniversary of the horrific terrorist attacks.

AIDS VIGIL ON CHRISTOPHER STREET: Before the Pride Weekend festivities kicked off, there was a somber AIDS Candlelight March & Vigil on Christopher Street on Friday evening. **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** was one of the keynote speakers, and the **Lavender Light Gospel Choir** under the direction of **Frank Cruz** sang. Rev. Pat pointedly reminded the crowd at the vigil, "The AIDS crisis is not over."

REV. ARLENE ACKERMAN ELECTED REGIONAL ELDER: Rev. Arlene Ackerman is the new Regional Elder for "Region 3" of our worldwide predominantly-LGBT MCC denomination. Region 3 encompasses New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia and Puerto Rico. At last month's Regional Conference in Fairfax, Virginia, Rev. Ackerman received 90% or more of the votes in both the Clergy and Lay Houses. About 250 people participated in the Regional Conference. MCCNY was represented by four voting members in the Clergy House: Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Pastor; Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, Assistant Pastor; Rev. Tawnee Walling, Food Pantry Director, and Rev. Reg Richburg, Spiritual Guidance Director. In the Lay House, MCCNY's four voting Delegates (elected at the Annual Congregational Meeting in January) were Rita Saylor, Buddy Seaton, Susie Chin and Norma Sharp. (**Susie Chin** held the distinction of being one of the five members of the Region-wide committee that nominated Rev. Ackerman).

Both houses of the Regional Conference voted even more overwhelmingly to nominate **Rev. Elder Don Eastman** to be Vice Moderator of the MCC denomination, an especially crucial post now with our denominational founder, **Rev. Elder Troy Perry**, planning to retire as Moderator in 2005. Next year's Regional Conference will be held in Puerto Rico.

In other news from the denomination, MCC headquarters in Los Angeles made this announcement on July 29th: "Metropolitan Community Churches, the predominantly LGBT Christian church with more than 300 congregations in 22 countries, has received recognition from the federal government to provide **chaplains to the U.S. Veterans Administration**. 'This marks a historic step for MCC churches,' said Rev. Troy Perry, longtime human rights activist and Moderator of the 52,000-member church organization. 'U.S. programs have long been hostile to LGBT military servicemembers and veterans, so this marks a positive step forward,' added Perry, himself a U.S. Army veteran." This development makes it all the more inexcusable that there is **no openly LGBT chaplain** here in our own city in the **NYPD**. It has been several years since Rev. Pat Bumgardner joined GOAL (Gay Officers Action League) and other community advocates in demanding that an openly LGBT clergyperson be named as an NYPD chaplain. There has been no response from the city and LGBT officers continue to be left with no source of spiritual guidance within the department.

Board members being commissioned by Rev. Pat. They appealed for increased giving.

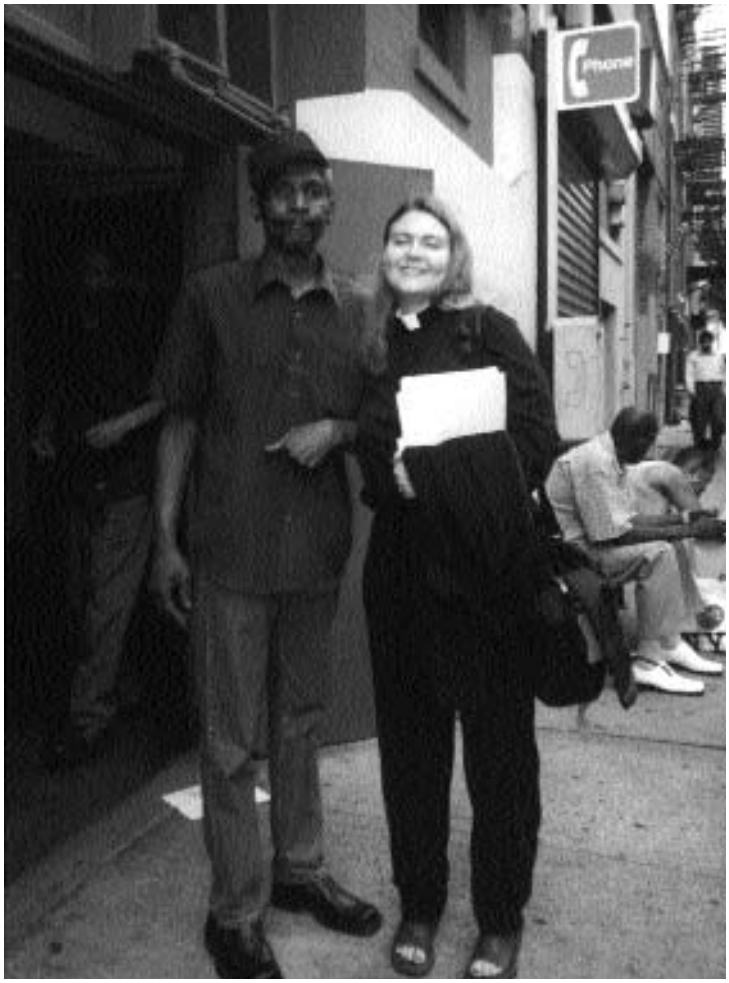
Puerto Rican Day, Arcoiris Members

Some of the church members doing outreach for MCCNY at the Folsom Street East festival.

Feeding the Hungry at the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry

By Rev. Tawnee Walling, Director of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry at MCCNY

Are you retired, out of work or just looking for a way to give back to God and your community? Getting involved with the MCCNY food pantry is a great way to volunteer your time and energy, to feel good about yourself and to help others in the process. Whether you can give 30 minutes or 3 hours, we have something for you to do. And if you are unable to volunteer your time, perhaps you could donate your clean, gently used seasonal clothing, linens or kitchen items. Or you could purchase some coffee cakes, donuts, fruit, milk or coffee for the new Thursday morning breakfast or dessert for the dinners on the last Tuesday and Thursday of the month. There's some way that everyone can get involved. Call Rev. Tawnee for more information or if you'd like to volunteer or make a donation.



Amos and Reverend Tawnee at the Food Pantry

On Stonewall Sunday, MCCNY's Food Pantry was named the **SYLVIA RIVERA FOOD PANTRY** in honor of the Stonewall veteran who was known to the hundreds she fed at the Food Pantry every week as *Sister Sylvia* – and whom we now revere as *Saint Sylvia*. Then an urn containing Sylvia's ashes was blessed (photo at right, with Rev. Kristen, Rev. Pat and Moshay Moses) and enshrined in front of the sanctuary.

EDITOR'S CORNER

By Joe Kennedy

A New Look, Thanks to Les LaRue: The MCCNY Newsletter today introduces pictures and improved graphics, thanks to the technical expertise and dedicated volunteerism of our new **Graphics & Layout Editor, Les LaRue**. Thank you, Les, from all *The Query's* readers.

Hallelujah, MCC Saves Indiana: One of the many qualities that make the sermons of our Pastor, Rev. Pat, so powerful is the way she sometimes illustrates points by citing experiences from her own life, including not-infrequent references to the tribulations and isolation of growing up queer in her native Indiana. Thus there was a special resonance recently upon finding out how things have improved dramatically for today's LGBT Hoosiers: they now have a thriving spiritual home of their own at Jesus MCC in Indianapolis. Rev. Troy Perry recently commented, "The growth of the Indianapolis church has been phenomenal." To boot, Jesus MCC Indianapolis' Pastor, Rev. Jeff Miner, and atheologian in his congregation, John Tyler Connoley, have written a book, ***The Children Are Free: Reexamining the Biblical Evidence on Same-sex Relationships***, that is the definitive word on the subject and will absolutely convince any truth-seeking Christian. (The book can be ordered at **www.jesusmcc.org**). Not long ago Dennis Wellman, who writes for the Newsletter at Jesus MCC Indianapolis, contacted MCCNY for information about the late Sylvia Rivera. Dennis explained that their Newsletter often covers prominent people and events in LGBT history for the benefit of younger members of their congregation (where the average age among the 390 Sunday worshippers is 35). Dennis' full-page article in their Newsletter gave an excellent overview of Sylvia's life and her role in the Stonewall Riots and the liberation movement that followed.

(Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter articles are written by the editor. PHOTO CREDITS: Sylvia Rivera urn dedication, Folsom Street East Festival and Puerto Rican Day Parade pictures courtesy of Deacon DANNY GONZALEZ. CAD Conference and Food Pantry pictures courtesy of Rev. Kristen. Board photo by Lynn Scott.)

Capital Campaign Fundraising Gala at the Copa Oct. 21st

Have you reserved your ticket yet for the MCCNY Capital Campaign's huge fundraising banquet on Monday evening, October 21st? More than 400 people have already made their reservations, and you won't want to miss this once-in-a-lifetime gala extravaganza at the Copacabana. The Copa is one of the most famous names in New York nightclub history and it's about to have its Grand Reopening at 560 West 34th Street. The banquet planning committee got a sneak preview of the new Copa and they say it's breathtaking. On Oct. 21st we'll be among the first New Yorkers to see and experience it for ourselves.

Entertainment for the October 21st event is being arranged by **DAVID RALEIGH**, who promises a first-rate stellar line-up. And if David promises it, you can be sure it will be fabulous: Besides being our Sunday morning pianist and a vocalist at Worship Services, David is a prominent musical star in the secular world. He's a band leader, a former nightclub owner/performer in the West Village, and for years he's held court almost nightly at the grand piano and microphone in the finest lounges in Manhattan.

Of course, a great fun time isn't the only item on the agenda for October 21st. There is also a **serious purpose**. The banquet moves the Capital Campaign's phase 2 into high gear. Everyone who's ever been a friend or supporter of MCCNY and its good works will be there, but there will also be **many contributors who are being introduced to the church for the first time**. This is the start of the Capital Campaign's drive to win large donations from wealthy individuals, institutions, foundations and corporations who've never given to the church or its social-services ministries before. An important part of the evening will be providing our guests with the opportunity to meet us and to familiarize themselves with our plans to do wonderful things when we get our new bigger building.

A source on the banquet planning committee confides that **big-name "celebrities"** and public officials are likely to be present. So will

MCC leaders including **Rev. Elder Troy Perry**, Founder and Moderator of our worldwide denomination, and **Rev. Elder Hong Tan**.

MCCNY's Capital Campaign is seeking to raise millions of dollars over the next few years to acquire a new home with: • A sanctuary with a seating capacity of at least 500. • A chapel to serve gatherings of 50. • An industrial kitchen complex to expand our Food Pantry services from 3,000 persons per month to 10,000 per month. • Space for an expanded shelter with professional staff to offer counseling and transitional housing for queer youth and the mentally ill. • Space to expand our educational programs. • Space to help house community groups which do not have a permanent home.

If you know of anyone who should be invited to the banquet – or of any business or organization that might want to take an ad in the event's souvenir journal (that's another vital source of income for the fundraiser) – contact the church office (212 629-7440) or one of the members of the hard-working banquet planning committee, who are: Lynn Scott, Rita Saylor, Mark Gilrain, Mohammad Shatara, Helen Love, Faith Nelson, David Raleigh, Cliff Boone, Robert Casaldo, Rev Tawnee Walling, Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini (under the overall direction of the Capital Campaign co-chaired by Franc Perry and Bruce Levitt).

SAVE THIS DATE — October 21, 2002

MCCNY GALA BANQUET

to benefit the Capital Campaign

A Glamorous Evening of Dining and Entertainment at the COPA!

Banquet Nets Over $80,000 for Capital Campaign

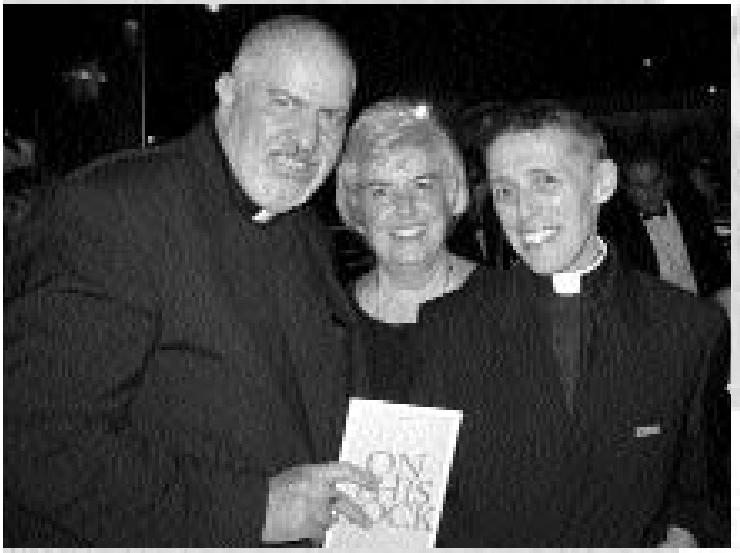
The Query
NEWSLETTER
Metropolitan Community Church of New York
December 2002

It was a grand and glorious evening that lived up to all the high expectations and then some – truly a singular moment in the annals of this 31-year-old LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) congregation, Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY).

The October 21st fundraising banquet at the new Copacabana nightclub on Manhattan's West Side added more than $80,000 to the coffers of MCCNY's Capital Campaign for a larger building and opened the possibility for a steady stream of bigger contributions to come by inaugurating Phase 2 of the Capital Campaign.

Franc Perry, chair of MCCNY's Capital Campaign, announced at the banquet that the Capital Campaign has established a Community Development Corporation (CDC) called Metropolitan Community Charities. This is a vital step in the fundraising process. It will make possible contributions by foundations, corporations and other large donors who would not give directly to a church. *(If you know of any such potential major donor, such as perhaps the company you work for, please call the church office at 212 629-7440).*

Upon entering the new Copa, located on West 36th Street at 11th Avenue, guests were escorted into a vast cocktail lounge where they immediately saw what the evening was all about: there were four large architect's sketches (created by Jeff Bornheimer, based on the vision of MCCNY's Pastor, Rev. Pat Bumgardner) showing exactly what the Capital Campaign is aiming to accomplish. The architectural sketches displayed interior and exterior views of the proposed new MCCNY church building and the adjacent social services center. The sketches revealed a beautiful and distinctive modern exterior for the new church with an impressive circular dome and a soaring bell tower, and provided details of the 500-seat sanctuary, which – with its raised seating – affords clear sightlines of the pulpit and altar for all worshippers.



AT THE BANQUET: Rev. Elder Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, with Mary Jane Gibney & Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Pastor of MCCNY. Excerpts from Rev. Pat's keynote address, page 3. (Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez).

The architect's sketches also provided an overview of the expanded church property that the Capital Campaign envisions. The sketches showed that the present 3-story church building on West 36th Street will become exclusively a social services center, enabling MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry to increase the number of hungry people it feeds each month from the current 4,000 to more than 10,000, and providing facilities for the church's Shelter for Homeless Queer Youths to sleep 60 people a night instead of the current limit of 6.

The sketches disclosed that the new church building will rise on the parking lot on West 35th Street immediately behind the present structure. Purchasing the parking lot is the Capital Campaign's first priority. The sketches also show where the planned memorial garden and chapel will be located on the new property. The chapel will host gatherings of up to 50 people and provide a columbarium where the ashes of deceased saints may be interred.

Banquet guests gathered around the architect's sketches and viewed them with obvious admiration and awe. It was a good way to start the evening, reminding everyone in a concrete manner of why the Capital Campaign's goal of raising millions of dollars over the next few years is so crucial.

There were many familiar MCCNY faces among the crowd in the Copa's cocktail lounge, but just as many newcomers being introduced to the church and its good works for the first time at this event, which had been publicized in *Next* magazine and other queer publications. There were banquet guests from far and wide: Rich Walker came all the way from San Francisco to sponsor a table. Scott Woolweaver, who has played in the Boston Pops, came from Boston to show his support for musician/impresario David Raleigh. There were members of Governor George Pataki's staff mingling with the crowd. (Was it just a coincidence that, after the Governor's aides were besieged with impassioned pleas for passage of a state-wide non-discrimination law by guests at

the banquet, the Governor announced the very next afternoon that – 31 years after it was first introduced, and 8 long years after he took office – the bill will finally come to the floor of the State Senate this year?)

Following a lively hour of socializing in the Copa's cocktail lounge, the 500 guests proceeded upstairs to the banquet hall. They had barely finished saying grace, munching on their mescalin salads and selecting their entree option – sirloin steak or portabello mushroom – when the evening's sensational entertainment began.

David Raleigh, a member of the banquet planning committee, recruited an all-star line-up of big-name performers for the evening and served as the master of ceremonies – besides doing more than his share as a vocalist and at the keyboards.

The first selection, performed by the MCCNY Men's Ensemble – David Raleigh, Frank Cruz, Eric James, Tim Mathis and Franc Perry – was an original composition, entitled "On This Rock" (Matthew 16:18), written for MCCNY's Capital Campaign by David Raleigh. Its lyrics proclaim in part [copyright 2001 by David Raleigh, reprinted with permission]:

On this rock will I build My church
A place where My love will set people free
In My house there is room for all
Who gather within to learn about Me.

I need your talents and your time
I need your nickels and your dimes
I need you on your knees in prayers
That My love reaches everywhere
I need your body and your soul…

I need MCC
Come build it with Me
Let's build MCC
I need you with Me
I need MCC.

Next up on stage, fresh from a hit run at the Time Café/Fez, was actor/singer Flotilla DeBarge, who had the crowd laughing and applauding. John Bucchino, award-winning songwriter and singer, then performed. He was followed by Brian Lane Green, the Tony Award-nominated actor/singer who made his debut on Broadway as Huck Finn in *Big River* and most recently appeared as Jojo in *The Life* – and who was seen in the popular gay movie *Circuit*.

Saving an exceptional treat for last, David Raleigh introduced Billy Porter, the star of stage and screen whose Broadway credits include such notable shows as *Miss Saigon*, *Grease*, and *Smokey Joe's Café*, and who has opened for the likes of Aretha Franklin and Rosie O'Donnell and has released his own hot-selling solo CD, but who is perhaps best known to gay film fans for his co-starring role in *The Broken Hearts Club* (which made its national cable debut on HBO2 the night of the banquet). Banquet-goers who tuned in to WBLS as they prepared themselves for the event heard Billy Porter's current R&B hit "Love Is on the Way" on the radio. David Raleigh reminded the crowd how thrilling it was to have a star of Billy Porter's fame performing for an MCCNY fundraiser.

Honoring MCCNY and supporting its Capital Campaign by their presence at the banquet were all three openly LGBT members of the New York City Council – Councilmembers Margarita Lopez, Phil Reed and Christine Quinn. (Councilmember Phil Reed, bless his heart, didn't stop there – he subsequently joined the congregation several times for Sunday morning Worship Services). Likewise attending the banquet was the first openly LGBT person elected to the New York State Legislature, long-time Assemblymember Deborah Glick.

Other high officials who regretted that scheduling conflicts prevented them from attending but who sent messages for publication in the banquet's Commemorative Journal included Mayor Mike Bloomberg, Congressmember Jerrold Nadler, City Comptroller William J. Thompson, Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields, and openly LGBT and HIV+ State Senator Tom Duane, prime sponsor of the transgender-inclusive version of SONDA, the state-wide sexual orientation non-discrimination act.

Distinguished guests at the banquet included Rev. Bishop Zachary Jones, Founder and Pastor of Unity Fellowship of Christ Church of New York in Brooklyn, and the Hon. Dr. Marjorie Hill who served as the official Mayoral liaison to the LGBT community in the Dinkins Administration. MCC Rev. Elder-elect Diane Fisher, the outgoing District Coordinator, attended. MCC Rev. Elder Hong Tan was unable to be present because of the death of his mother, but he wired a message saying, "I am with you in spirit and prayers… The need is SO great and I thank God for all of your faithfulness and vision not only to see but bravely to go forward in faith to claim the vision that will come true." (Congratulations are in order for Rev. Hong upon his appointment by London Mayor Ken Livingston as a Senior Health Commissioner in charge of overseeing more than three-quarters of a billion dollars worth of health services each year).

The serious business of the banquet came when Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Founder and Moderator of the 34-year-old worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination (which now has 400 churches with 55,000 members in 22 countries, making it the largest LGBT organization on the face of the globe), took the podium to introduce MCCNY's Pastor, Rev. Pat Bumgardner.

Rev. Pat's extraordinarily powerful, compelling and moving keynote address opened many hearts (and wallets) at the banquet. A few brief excerpts:

…Tonight I want to talk about the crossroads, the point of decision I believe we who care passionately about the future of this city and its people, especially its children, are

at…Estimates range from 8,000 to 30,000 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children sleeping on our streets every night…You just have to have turned away ONE child – given one child a bag lunch, a hug and a fervent prayer for safety while you turned them out for the night – before you know something HAS to be done. On June 19th of this year, MCCNY opened its doors – inadequate as our current space is – to house the Ali Forney Center, the only space in all of New York City specifically designed to house homeless queer youth. Each night from 8 p.m. to 8 a.m., six young people – hear me: SIX! – out of 8 or 9 or 10 or 30 THOUSAND homeless queer children! – find refuge at MCCNY. About all that is being done for them right now is the provision of a safe place to sleep and shower, a couple of family-style meals (supper and breakfast) and a chance to talk and socialize with other kids like themselves. They need more… They need to get out of a shelter and into safe, affordable and permanent housing – and to do that, they need mentors and professional guidance; they need to finish school and training for jobs and help finding those jobs; they need life skills and good self-esteem and solid spiritual foundations: They need US – believing in their value and worth for the future, and putting our money, our connections, our time and energy where our hearts already are… Children, all children deserve to make it in this world – and adults too. Last month alone, 4,157 people received some form of food assistance through our Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry ministry…

Reverend Pat Bumgardner addresses the banquet.

St. Oscar Wilde once wrote, "God says, 'Wherefore and for what reason can I not send thee into heaven?' 'Because' (humanity answers) 'never and in no place have we been able to imagine it.'" We HAVE been able to imagine it: turning our existing building into a social services center and building a sanctuary on the parking lot behind it. We've been able to bring all kinds of people together from every race and culture and creed to support this vision, and tonight I invite you to join in imagining a spiritual complex where instead of 6, there are 60 kids, not only housed and fed, but part of a center where they would have the professional mentors they need, access to technical training and mental health counseling and the kind of support necessary to stay clean and sober… a spiritual center with an industrial kitchen complex to expand our feeding assistance from four thousand to ten thousand people each month…I want a big church, a sanctuary that can seat 500 or more – I won't lie to you – but that isn't the whole picture to me; I want the kind of sanctuary…where other community forums and gatherings can happen. It makes no sense to me that in a city the size of New York, there is not one queer-identified and owned space that can seat that many people at a time; to me, that's the old days, when not more than a few of us could congregate without being swept up… New York City is the center of the world. I believe God has called MCCNY to be a spiritual center for this city!

[Full text available at www.mccny.org].

Rev. Pat's speech segued into a 10-minute film about the church and its ministries. The upbeat documentary, created by Alan Roth, featured rousing sacred music by members of the church's music ministry present and past (including the full 30-voice MCCNY choir under the direction of John Fischer, and the unforgettable singing of former Assistant Pastor Rev. Pressley Sutherland, his spouse David Bedella and former choirmaster Frank Cruz) interspersed with scenes of ministries such as the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry, along with testimonial comments from people served by those ministries and a diverse cross-section of the congregation witnessing to how they found God's love at MCCNY and now seek to bring that love to others by expanding the church and its facilities.

Anything the Query could say about the countless hours of hard work by the banquet planning committee and the volunteers who assisted them would have to be so extravagant to be accurate that it would seem hyperbolic to anyone who wasn't there. So suffice it to say, nothing that's been reported in the past few pages would have happened without the toils of the banquet planning committee: Lynn Scott & Rita Saylor, Mark Gilrain & Mohammad Shatara, Helen Love & Faith Nelson, Cliff Boone & Robert Casaldo, and David Raleigh.

Again, special thanks to MCCNY's Capital Campaign members: Candidate for the ordained ministry Franc Perry, chair; John Madera, scribe; Jeff Bornheimer, scout; Bob France, an attorney who did the lion's share of the legal work necessary to incorporate as a Community Development Corporation; Deacon Malcolm W. Smith; and the Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Pastor.

Contributions to the Capital Campaign can be mailed to MCCNY, 446 W. 36th St., NY NY 10018.

At a pre-banquet publicity event, Rev. Kristen is "crowned" by banquet planning committee members Cliff Boone & Robert Casaldo.

ART SALE BENEFITS CAPITAL CAMPAIGN:

Andre Moreira & Jerome Dumaine, who are on the committee soliciting major donors for the Capital Campaign, file this report: *At the Oct. 21st gala, Tom Cleveland from* ***OmnifineArt*** *made an offer to help raise money. For each item purchased directly from OmnifineArt, the purchaser will receive a* ***20% discount*** *off the retail price and* ***30% of the retail price will go to MCCNY's Capital Campaign.*** *All you have to do is mention MCCNY at the time of the purchase. OmnifineArts has exclusive reproduction rights from the entire collection of the Smithsonian and other fine museums around the world, and they also sell art from young painters and sculptors. Two pieces that were on display at the Oct. 21st banquet received lots of inquiries. This artwork would make an excellent holiday gift for yourself or others; also please pass this information along to interior decorators and art collectors you may know. Check the OmnifineArt website* ***www.omnifineart.com*** *or call toll-free 1-800-666-4131, ext. 236. This offer lasts until the end of the year and may be extended for the duration of the Capital Campaign if there is enough interest. Thanks to* ***Tom Cleveland*** *and* ***David Chin*** *of* ***OmnifineArt*** *for this generous offer.*

MUSIC RECITAL BENEFIT FOR CAPITAL CAMPAIGN:

Daniel Brenna (outstanding MCCNY choir member and soloist) will be offering a classical vocal concert for the benefit of the MCCNY Capital Campaign on Friday, Feb. 14th at 8 p.m. in the sanctuary of Christ and St. Stephen's Church (120 W. 69th St.). Tickets will be available at the door for a suggested price of $15. See Daniel at church on Sundays if you would like to make a reservation. Djordje Nesic will be Daniel's collaborative pianist as they perform works by Mozart, Kilpinen, Rachmaninov, Sibelius, Kander and other American composers. The following month the program goes on international tour in Finland.

Banquet!

500 people attended the $100-a-plate fundraising banquet for MCCNY's Capital Campaign. Every one of them deserves to have their picture in the Newsletter. Unfortunately, we regret we don't have space to do that, so we hope no one is offended that these few snapshots must try to convey the enthusiasm that filled the Copa on Oct. 21st. (Photographs by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)

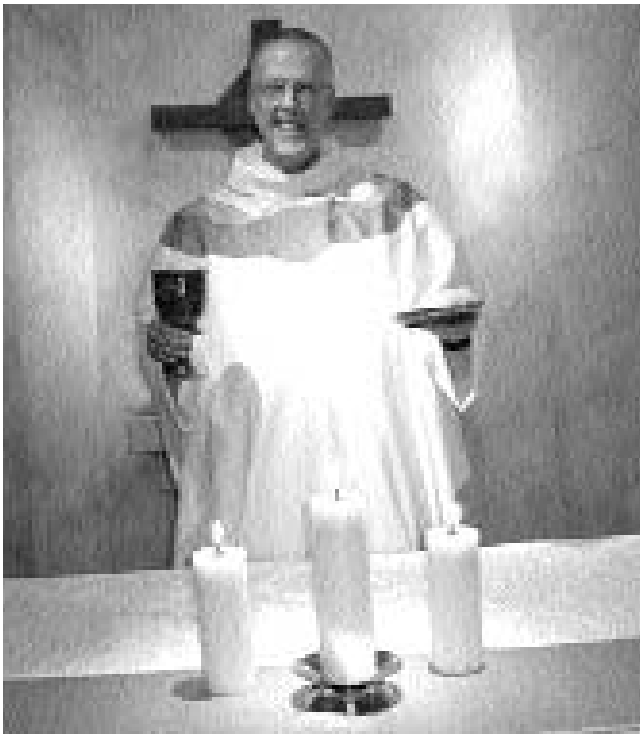
People & Events in the News

SEPTEMBER 11TH OBSERVED: On the first anniversary of the horrific 9/11 terrorist attacks, MCCNY's sanctuary was filled for a special Service of Remembrance and Hope. Everyone present received a candle and an acorn. Three voices who spoke: Deacon Enez Cooper, whose beloved spouse Renee Barrett died; Daniel Brenna and Jerome Dumaine, who narrowly escaped with their lives that awful day.

11 NEW DEACONS TAKE OFFICE: A record number of new lay Deacons were invested by Pastor Rev. Pat Bumgardner at MCCNY during Worship Services on Sunday, Sept. 29th. Lay Deacons are a vital part of the Pastoral Staff and perform a great number of functions including praying with people who request it. They must complete a rigorous course of instruction and training by the Pastor before being invested. They serve for a term of 3 years, which may be renewed. The 11 new Deacons are: Jorge Blondette, Montel Cherry, Enez Cooper, Tyrone Jackson, Jesus Montoya, Carolyn Parker, Len Richardson, Norma Sharp, Michelle Slack, Malcolm Smith and Bali White. They join the 5 Deacons already serving: Marvin Bagwell, Vernon Bruette, Danny Gonzalez, Sandy Hernandez and Buddy Seaton.

Some of the new deacons praying as they are commissioned.

REV. DR. ROBIN HAWLEY GORSLINE ORDAINED: Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline, MCCNY's Director of Religious Education, was ordained into the ranks of the clergy in the worldwide MCC denomination in the presence of his relatives and friends and the MCCNY congregation on Sunday morning, October 20th. It was a joyous occasion made all the more so by the knowledge that, unlike so many who are ordained at this MCC Teaching Church and then leave to answer calls elsewhere in the denomination, Rev. Robin will be staying here at this church. Rev. Robin's spouse, Dr. Jonathan Lebolt, is a member of the evening choir and sang a beautiful solo during the Ordination Ceremony. Denise Jansen and Rosemarie Napoli led the congregation in a lovely, moving chant of the Litany of the Saints, including not only the traditional canon from Mary Mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene to Joan of Arc but saints of the modern era from Oscar Wilde, Dorothy Day, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X and Archbishop Oscar Romero to MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera, Alejandro Ortiz, Adrian Pendragon, Ron Mounts, Gabby Devries, John Orlando, Renee Barrett and all the saints who died on 9/11, and Rev. Robin's own dear deceased loved ones and ancestors.



Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline celebrates Communion at his Ordination Service.

COUNCIL OF MINISTRIES MEETS MONTHLY: Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, MCCNY's Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, hosts monthly meetings (3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m.) where coordinators and representatives of the church's active ministries gather for the sharing of information and insights and mutual re-invigoration. Some of the currently most active ministries are: Arcoiris Latina/os Cristianos, A Good Word Library, Asian/Pacific Islanders, Children's (including Sunday School), Choir and Music (under the direction of John Fischer), Christians of African Descent (Deacon Carolyn Parker, chair), 40+, GenderPeople, Men's Programming (Steven Rodick, coordinator), Newsletter, Prayer Power, Religious Education, Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry (Rev. Tawnee Walling, director), 12-Step, Wednesday 7 p.m. Midweek Worship (under the direction of Candidate for the ordained ministry Franc Perry), Women's Programming. These ministries are of course open,

 (continued from page 5)

and volunteers/new members are eagerly welcomed. For more information on how you can participate, contact Rev. Kristen (212 629-7440 ext. 11, or RevKrisKC@aol.com). Emory Edwards has assumed the challenge of reviving and upgrading the vital Welcome Home ministry; to volunteer or find out more, contact Emory at 201 915-9814 or eedwards@aya.yale.edu

IMPORTANT ANNIVERSARIES CELEBRATED: On October 9th, MCCNY joined with the worldwide predominantly-LGBT MCC denomination in celebrating the 34th anniversary of the founding of Metropolitan Community Churches by Rev. Troy Perry in Los Angeles in October 1968. On Halloween Weekend (with the Imperial Court of NY in attendance) MCCNY celebrated the 9th anniversary of the acquisition of the present church at 446 W. 36th Street in Manhattan, which made MCCNY the first LGBT religious or spiritual organization in NYC to own its own building. And next month on January 5th (Epiphany Sunday/Fiesta de los Reyes Magos, Dia de los Sabios) MCCNY observes with great joy the 31st anniversary of the founding of this queer congregation in NYC by the late Rev. Howard Wells in January 1972.

CHURCH THANKS ITS VOLUNTEERS: Assistant Pastor Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini paid tribute to the volunteers whose efforts – often behind the scenes and unheralded – make MCCNY the vibrant congregation and hotbed of good works that it is. Visitors often express astonishment that this church accomplishes with 400 members what some parishes of several thousand cannot do; that is made possible because, with God's grace and blessing, the members and friends of MCCNY freely devote so much of their time and talent without seeking recognition. But recognition was the name of the game at the first annual "Glinda Awards" on Thursday evening, Nov. 7th. About 60 of the 166 "winners" showed up to receive their awards in person (all will receive certificates). The ceremony was conducted amidst considerable wit and humor by Rev. Kristen, Deacons Montel Cherry & Michelle Slack, with music by John Fischer and Carolyn Eufrasio. One of the many unsung heroes who finally got to take a bow in public was Howard Herrera, who creates and places all of the church's advertising. He is responsible for the ads seen every week in Gay City News and other LGBT publications, and he designs the ubiquitous "God Made Us Queer – MCCNY" banners and stickers that are used so effectively for outreach and recruitment. The penultimate prize at the "Glindas," the prestigious Best Overall volunteer award, went – in a tie – to Bob Hollinger and Deacon Buddy Seaton. Then the evening ended with presentation of the Lifetime Achievement Award to Joe Kennedy, who has been an activist for queer liberation since he joined the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) more than 3 decades ago. [Editor's note: Rev. Kristen and Query co-editor Les LaRue insisted on inserting that last sentence over the embarrassed protests of your humble editor].

MEN'S GROUP KEEPS BUSY: The Homecoming Dance for the whole congregation in September was hosted by MCCNY's men's programming ministry, which also decorated the church's social hall for the Christmas season at its annual "Sparkle decorating party and devotional." Coordinator Steven Rodick reports the men's group has many activities open to all self-identified men including summer barbecues/pool parties, year-round movie nights, lectures, discussion groups (2 recent topics included safer sex and body image) and a prayer-centered event called Direct Connect. Volunteers from the men's group staffed MCCNY's booth at the Gay Life Expo at the Javits Center last month. Besides coordinator Steven Rodick, the men's group steering committee members are Steve Baker, Frank DiMarco, Howard Herrera, Bob Hollinger, Deacon Tyrone Jackson and Mark McNease. The group was founded nearly 5 years ago by Mark Steiger, Rev. Pressley Sutherland and Steven Rodick. The new Pastoral Staff liaison to the men's group is Candidate for the ordained ministry Michael Hydes.

NEWS IN BRIEF: Rev. Patrick Cheng, former Assistant Pastor of MCCNY, has become Chair of Asian-Pacific Islander ministries for the entire worldwide MCC denomination…. Bob Wolff, former MCCNY Board Member, has written from his home in Vermont to thank his many friends here for continuing to keep him in their prayers during this difficult time of illness…. Heritage of Pride (HOP), the LGBT organization that runs NYC's June Pride events including the march down Fifth Avenue, nominated MCCNY's 2002 float for an award in the "Best Sound System" category. Hardly a year goes by that the MCCNY contingent and its float, with music by David Raleigh's Band and the choir directed by John Fischer, don't garner some kind of public acclaim….

MCCNY's 2002 Pride float: nominated for "Best Sound". (photo by Valerie King)

The Advocate national newsmagazine notes the 34th anniversary of the founding of the MCC denomination.

Editor's Corner by Joe Kennedy

MORE IMPROVEMENTS, THANKS TO LES LARUE: Once again, the Query Newsletter owes a big debt of gratitude to Graphics and Layout Editor Les LaRue. Les's task was especially daunting with the unusual number of pictures in this issue. And, above and beyond the call, Les found a new LGBT-friendly printer (SharpImage Printing, Inc.) who charges no more for 2-color printing than used to be paid for one color. We've also upped our circulation to 1,500.

SPEAKING OUT FOR GOD'S TRUTH: Inspired by the messages heard from MCCNY's pulpit each Sunday and the lessons learned at "Queering the Bible" Bible Study, MCCNY's congregants are empowered and emboldened to speak out whenever they encounter God's Word being misconstrued or misused. Reprinted below are 2 recent examples that reached thousands of readers. The first is a letter by musician and ACT UP activist Andy Buck in Gay City News (9/27-10/3/02) in response to a column by Michelangelo Signorile, and the second is a letter by Yours Truly in the Provincetown Banner (7/25/02) in reply to a letter headlined "Town faces God's wrath."

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter articles are written by the editor.

Photo credits: Pride float by VALERIE KING. All others by Deacon DANNY GONZALEZ.

THE BIBLE, BY THE NUMBERS

To the Editor:

I just wanted to comment on Michelangelo Signorile's column in last week's Gay City News ("Might Oklahoma be OK?" September 20 - 26). Although I appreciate his overall message, I'd like to correct a couple of his assumptions about the Bible.

First of all, despite claims by Pentecostals, Fundamentalists, and others, it is actually impossible to interpret the Bible literally, unless one is schizophrenic. If anyone claims to you that they are Biblical literalists, ask them how many of each kind of animal Noah gathered onto the ark. The answer is two...and, thanks to some inconsistent editing a couple of thousand years ago, the answer is also seven.

Secondly, it is not true that "we all know too well what the Bible says about homosexuality." Many don't realize that, with one exception, no book in the Bible says anything clear (if anything at all) about consensual homosexual relationships. Temple prostitution, yes. Pedophilia, probably. Inhospitality to strangers – in the case of the Sodom story – yes. (Ezekiel himself flatly states that this was the sin of Sodom. Isn't it ironic, therefore, that inhospitable gay-bashers and not their targets are the actual Sodomites?)

But, if my memory serves, only the book of Leviticus has a clearly stated admonition against men lying with men and women with women. No other Old Testament prophet discusses it. Neither does Jesus. And, of course, in Leviticus, Moses also comes down hard on people who eat pork and mix their fabrics. Which brings us back to those so-called literalists. How many of them are fabric-mixing carnivores?

Homophobes can claim what they want, but please don't fall into the trap that, usually, only lazy journalists fall into (and I don't consider Signorile one of them), by assigning as fact that which is merely myth.

Andy Buck
Brooklyn

Haters are the real Sodomites

To the editor:

The mid-summer letters column in the Banner hardly seems the place for a weighty theological discussion or Biblical exegesis. But I must respond to your letter-writer from Smalltown, Ohio who is as ignorant and ill-informed about Scripture as he is hateful and bigoted when he attacks P-town for "go[ing] easy on gays" and declares, "It sure isn't difficult to figure out why God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah."

The sin of Sodom was inhospitality to strangers, failure to help visitors in need. The prophet Ezekiel quotes God on why Sodom was destroyed: "This was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had pride, excess of food, and prosperous ease, but did not aid the poor and needy." (Ezekiel 16 : 49). Jesus, instructing his apostles as he sends them out to preach, said, "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgement than for that town." (Matthew 10 : 14 - 15). Could Christ have been any more emphatic that the sin of Sodom was inhospitality and rudeness to visitors?

Authorities such as The New Oxford Annotated Bible (Third Edition, 2001) make this crystal clear. Scholars now know that it was not until the medieval Dark Ages that the myth was invented linking Sodom's destruction same-sex love. The truth is that, by their refusal to welcome and embrace P-town's visitors (from a minority group that has been marginalized and discriminated against), it is the inhospitable and hateful ones who –quite literally, according to the Biblical text – are the Sodomites, guilty and facing God's wrath.

Joe Kennedy
New York City

Upcoming Events

See schedule of ***Holidays Services*** *below.*

Sun., Jan. 19 at 2 p.m., ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING (members, please attend: MCCNY's 2003 budget will be adopted, election for Board of Directors will be held).

Sat., Feb. 8 at 7 p.m., annual Evening of Entertainment.

Sat., Feb. 15th at 10 a.m., annual Valentine's Day bag lunch distribution to the homeless around the city.

Wed., March 6 at 7 p.m., Ash Wednesday Service with distribution of ashes and Communion.

Tues., March 11th, Lenten Bible Study begins (classes are held at many convenient times throughout the week, at the church and other locations).

Part of the morning choir on Homecoming Sunday. (Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)

HOL YS SC

C EVE, 7 umgardner preaching; as Eve party with hot buffet fo

RISTMAS DAY, 11 a.m.: Service hristmas din follows in soc all.

KWAN c. 29th, 10 a.m p.m.: nzaa Ca an members hristians cent; Rev. Bu g.

NE 31st: ervice. Cont t church office for details.

MART urs., Jan. 16, 2003, 7 p.m LGBTQ Dr. Martin Luther Ki sponsored st Chu Congrega Beth Simc

Upcoming Events

MCCNY SPIRITUAL RETREATS – May 9-11 and Sept. 12-14: To be held at the Incarnation Center (www.incarnationcenter.org), an Episcopalian retreat center on a lovely 350-acre site – complete with its own lake and outdoor labyrinth – in Ivoryton, CT, about two and half hours from NYC. All-expenses-paid cost for each retreat is about $120. Sign up immediately, as space is limited. Contact Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini at the church office, 212 629-7440 ext. 11.

"FASHION ON GENDER," a transgender charity fashion show to benefit MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry – May 20 at 8 p.m. Suggested donation $-10.

STAFF OF THE QUERY NEWSLETTER:

Editor: Joe Kennedy

Layout & Graphic Design Editor: Les LaRue

Photographer: Deacon Danny Gonzalez

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter articles are written by the editor. The Query is indebted to the dozen or so volunteers who kindly give up one Sunday afternoon every three months for a "Newsletter mailing-out party." Ministries of the church are encouraged to keep the Newsletter informed of your activities so we can spread the word to our circulation of 1,500.

HOLY WEEK SERVICES:

- **PALM SUNDAY, April 13 at 10 am and 7 pm, Blessing and Distribution of the Palms, Rev. Pat Bumgardner, preaching.**
- **Wednesday, April 16th at 7 pm, Foot-washing service, Candidate Franc Perry presiding.**
- **HOLY THURSDAY, April 18th at 7 pm, "queer liberation seder" in the social hall, Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini and Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline presiding.**
- **GOOD FRIDAY, April 18th at 7 pm, Stations of the Cross and Reading of the Passion, Lavender Light Gospel Choir and MCCNY Spectacular {!} Choir performing.**
- **HOLY SATURDAY, April 19th at 3 pm, Annual Easter Banquet in the lovely Refectory at Union, Honoring Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS and Faisal Alam.**
- **HOLY SATURDAY, April 19th at 7 pm, Easter Vigil Service with Lighting of the New Fire**
- **EASTER SUNDAY, April 20th at 10 am and 7 pm, Celebration of the Resurrection, David Raleigh's Little/Big Band! and MCCNY Outrageous{!} Choir performing.**

The Rev. Troy D. Perry preaching Good Friday through Easter!

Tickets still available for the Easter banquet with Rev. Troy Perry Sat., Apr. 19, 3 PM. Call 212 629-7440

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

An Easter Message From the Pastor
by Reverend Pat Bumgardner

Believing is Seeing

Easter 2003

Dear Friends,
As we prepare to once again celebrate this central feast in the Church year — the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ — I am struck by the final benediction of John's Gospel: "Blessed are those who have not seen, and yet believe."

There are so many things our hearts hunger and thirst for, so many things our eyes long to see.

I do not know where we will be by Easter, but now as I write this people are fighting and being wounded or captured; some are dying. I want to see peace on this earth.

The city we live in is proposing mammoth cuts to community based organizations, such as ours, that serve and care for people living with AIDS. We need more, not less, money for food and supplies. We want to see abundance.

We've prayed and strategized and worked — some have genuinely sacrificed— for a new home for MCCNY. Everyone is ready to see our vision realized.

The Query
Newsletter
Metropolitan Community Church of New York
April 2003

Many things are yet before us, but we hold on to our dream, our vision, the promise. We see with the eyes of faith. And it's that holding on with courage and conviction — that visionary glancing ahead — that characterizes us as the kind of blessed people John's Gospel was talking about. — There is no place I would rather be for Holy Week and Easter; no people I find more inspiring than you who make up MCCNY. You give life and breath to the truth and the promise of the Gospel. Thank you for your witness. You give me hope, and a sense of the possibilities before us. For this resurrecting blessing, I thank you.

I hope that you, too, will make MCCNY your spiritual center this holy season as we celebrate.

With Love,

Rev. Pat

*A BREAKTHROUGH FOR SAME-SEX MARRIAGE EQUALITY? **Maribelle Vazquez**, a leader in MCCNY's Arcoiris Latino/a ministry, and her spouse, **Sophia Pazos**, get their marriage license application at the City Clerk's office on Valentine's Day. They and other same-sex couples from the church are pursuing legal action. (Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)*

MCC Says: End Discrimination In Marriage Now

The frigid weather outside was only a prelude to the bigoted cold shoulder that same-sex couples from Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) received when they demanded marriage licenses on **Valentine's Day**. The **City Clerk** turned them away empty-handed, insisting that marriage and the 1,049 specific legal privileges that come with it are reserved only for heterosexuals. But the MCCNY couples say this outrageously discriminatory message of second-class citizenship for queer people will not be the last word. Represented by attorney and MCCNY member **Ted Bohn**, the same-sex couples are filing Article 78 challenges in

court to overturn the administrative action of the City Clerk. At the same time, MCCNY will aggressively pursue every avenue to achieve **Rev**. **Troy Perry's** dream of making state-recognized same-sex marriage a reality in his lifetime.

MCCNY Pastor **Rev**. **Pat Bumgardner** and her spouse of 16 years, **MARY Jane Gibney**, along with eight other same-sex couples from the congregation and more than a dozen friends, supporters and representatives of the queer media (including a film crew from the **PBS's *In the Life***) arrived outside New York City's Municipal Building across the street from City Hall shortly after dawn to be first in line on that bitter cold Valentine's Day morning. When the Municipal Building's doors opened at 8:30, there was a hassle immediately when a queer-phobic security guard tried to bar ***Gay City News*** photographer **Doug Meszler** from entering to cover the protest. Saner heads ultimately prevailed, and the MCCNY group proceeded up to the Marriage License Bureau in the City Clerk's office.

Rev. Pat and **Mary Jane** asked for a marriage license application at the appropriate window and were given one. **MARIBELLE VAZQUEZ**, a leader in MCCNY's **Arcoiris [Rainbow] Latino/a ministry**, and her spouse, **Sophia Pazos**, asked for a marriage license application and were given one. Then a gay male couple asked for a marriage license application. They were refused. This stirred up more turmoil.

The editor of this Newsletter asked **City Clerk Victor Robles** why a gay male couple was a denied a marriage application after two lesbian couples had been given marriage license applications. Robles at first angrily and emphatically denied that any same-sex couples had been given marriage license applications. When it was quickly made evident to Robles that this statement was false and that indeed two lesbian couples had received marriage license applications from the proper window (see the page one photo of **Maribelle Vazquez** and **Sophia Pazos** receiving their marriage license application through the window), the official explanation changed to another absurdity: the lesbian couples were given the marriage license applications because ***no one could tell they were same-sex couples***, but the gay male couple was refused because they were **"TOO OBVIOUS"**. Probably the truth, as hinted in the ***New York Blade's*** report on the incident by **Kevin Spence**, was that an employee at the window in the City Clerk's office gave out the initial two applications to the same-sex couples because (as she reportedly whispered to Rev. Pat in hushed tones) "I'm with you, I'm for it, I'm gay too," but then she had to stop for fear of losing her job.

Other same-sex couples – including people who are African-American, Latino/a and white, lesbian and gay male, young and middle-aged – asked for marriage license applications at the windows and all were denied. Rev. Dr. Robin **Hawley Gorsline**, MCCNY's director of religious education, and his spouse, **Dr. Jonathan Lebolt**, decided to take another tack. Rev. Robin went up to the window to seek their application by himself. He was refused. The clerk insisted on seeing who his intended betrothed was before giving him the application. But rather than leaving the window meekly, Rev. Robin remained for half an hour demanding to see where it was written that one's proposed spouse had to accompany one to the window to get a license application. All the while the many heterosexual couples who flocked to the City Clerk's office for Valentine's Day had to wait, and the line outside the Municipal Building had grown to more than an hour's wait. "I'm very proud of Robin" for staying at the window and demanding his rights, said Jonathan, as quoted by **Andy Humm** in ***Gay City News***.

Perhaps the touchstone of the day in media coverage was photographer **Doug Meszler's** color picture in ***Gay City News*** of MCCNY **Deacons Montel Cherry & Michelle Slack**, a picture showing sad but very loving spouses supporting each other after they were – in the words of the picture's caption – "**TURNED AWAY**…at the City Clerk's office."

Meanwhile, **Rev. Pat & Mary Jane**, and then **Maribelle & Sophia**, filled out their applications and proceeded to the next window to get their actual marriage licenses. They were denied. But they would not leave without a lengthy discussion and debate. Maribelle & Sophia remained at the desk for an hour. The clerk at the desk brought over the City Clerk's counsel to explain the refusal to issue them a marriage license. Finally, after long individual meetings with various same-sex couples, City Clerk Robles and his counsel agreed to a **group meeting** with all the same-sex couples, their supporters and their attorney Ted Bohn. Robles said he was only obeying the law as interpreted by his office's counsel. Rev. Pat thanked Robles for treating the protesters with courtesy; he had not called the police and had them arrested, even though they had clearly created a spectacle and slowed things down for hours on an already very busy, hectic day in his office. (Part of the reason for the non-violent treatment of the protesters by the City Clerk's office stemmed from the great **respect Robles developed for Rev. Pat** years ago when he was a City Councilmember and she lobbied him on behalf of justice for LGBT people).

Before departing, the same-sex couples and their supporters sang **"WE SHALL OVERCOME"** and announced that they would see the City Clerk in court.

The protest at the City Clerk's office was one of 120 such actions by MCC churches all across the country on

Leather Sunday *at MCCNY found these congregants dressed for the occasion. (Leather Sunday photos by Deacon Danny Gonzalez).*

Diversity and inclusiveness are hallmarks of this church. Ask a **transgender** person what one of the most trans-friendly places in NYC is and the answer will be "MCCNY." Ask a leather person what one of the most leather-friendly places is and the answer will be the same. No wonder an informal motto of this queer church is, **"Whether you're into leather or lace or anything in between, you've come to the right place at MCCNY!"** The 400-member Metro Bears club holds their meetings at MCCNY and have donated generously to the church's social services ministries. When **Wally Wallace**, the former manager of the legendary **Mineshaft** club, died, the gay leather community overflowed MCCNY for his memorial service (organized by **Deacon Marvin Bagwell**). The church's congregation always gets a chuckle when Rev. Pat refers to Leather Sunday as "an ancient liturgical tradition" because they know she's talking not just about MCCNY's long-standing policy of inclusiveness for leather people but to Biblical references as well – **John the Baptist**, of course, wore leather (Matthew 3:4), and centuries before that the description of God's prophet Elijah sounds a lot like those guys at the Metro Bears meetings: "a hairy man, with a leather" garment (2 Kings 1:8). In more recent times, according to ***The Other Side of Silence*** (1998, Henry Holt & Co. NYC), John Loughery's scholarly history of gays in the 20th century, in 1968 Los Angeles **"a tall, well-built bear of a man, Troy Perry"** was called by God to be a prophet for a new generation. The congregation of the handsome, gregarious leatherman named Rev. Perry (who was then 28 years old) grew so rapidly that, Loughery relates, at first some wags wondered "whether MCC…was flourishing…[only] because the founder was so determined, handsome, and charismatic." That question, Loughery continues, was soon answered "as MCC branched out" across the country and around the globe.

Rev. Pat Bumgardner *wears the leather stole given to herby NYC's leather community in appreciation for the church's inclusive attitude to all in the LGBT community.*

An MCCNY banner marks the gathering spot for the church's contingent as the ***Inclusive St. Patrick's Parade*** *assembles in Queens.*

The 2-mile march through Sunnyside and Woodside, organized by gay activist **Brendan Fay**, is a rebuke to and a protest against the Manhattan parade that refuses to allow LGBT groups to march behind their own banners, as all other groups can. ***The New York Times*** headline called the Queens event "A Parade That Has Gays and the Mayor" and quoted Mayor Bloomberg as declaring, "I'm glad everybody can come and march in this parade – I wish all parades were that way." (So why doesn't he boycott parades that discriminate?) MCCNY's participation in the inclusive Queens parade is both a call for social justice and an act of outreach.

PUBLISHED LETTER REVEALS GOOD NEWS TO THE WIDER COMMUNITY:

MCCNY's Interfaith Celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday and the Capital Campaign's fundraising banquet at the Copacabana last year were brought to the attention of the whole queer community in this letter published in ***Gay City News*** (10-16 Jan 03):

January 8, 2003

To the Editor:

We agree with the letter writer Dion Brown (Gay City News, January 3-9, 2003) that the LGBT media should widen its definition of what's news – in other words, what interests the community – to go beyond a few stereotypical subjects.

Dion mentions adding sports coverage for starters.

We'd also like to see much more about the activities of the major LGBT religious congregations in the area, such as Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), Unity Fellowship Church (UFC), and Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (CBST).

Week in and week out, these LGBT houses of worship pack their pews with a total of a thousand people–and many times that number on special occasions. They play an important part in the life of the queer community and the struggle for social justice. To cite just 2 examples:

At their annual LGBT Interfaith Celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, these three congregations are sending hundreds of letters to the White House demanding immediate freedom for 13 African Americans who are in jail in Texas on phony, trumped-up, racist charges.

Recently, 500 people paid $100 and up to attend a fundraiser for MCC at the Copacabana. Out public officials such as Margarite Lopez, Phil Reed, Christine Quinn, and Deborah Glick were there, along with prominent entertainers like Flotilla DeBarge and Billy Porter, plus nationally known gay religious leaders including Rev. Troy Perry and Bishop Zachary Jones. The governor sent a staff member with greetings, and the mayor sent a letter of support. The fundraiser launched a multi-year, multi-million-dollar drive by MCC to get bigger facilities – with a seating capacity of 500 people (for LGBT meetings and community forums as well as religious services); with an expanded Homeless Queer Youth Shelter to house 60 kids a night (instead of 6), and with an expanded Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry to serve 10,000 meals a month (instead of the current 4,00) to people living with AIDS and other folks in need.

All these ingredients – trendy fundraising locale, well-known politicians and entertainers, lots of money raised for a good cause that will have a real impact on the lives of people in our community – seem to add up to "newsworthy", yet there was nary a peep about it in the paper.

Yes, mainstream religion has been one of the worst oppressors and slanderers of queer people. And yes, that makes it MORE – NOT LESS – important for Gay City News to keep the community abreast of developments in the large, growing, fully and proudly queer and social justice activist religious congregations that are charting a new path into a liberated future right here and right now.

Rita Saylor and Lynn Scott
Ocean Grove, NJ

People in the News

Rev. Elder Arlene Ackerman *visiting MCCNY last month. Rev. Arlene, the new Regional Elder (akin to Presiding Bishop) for region three in the worldwide predominantly LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, hailed MCCNY is an "Anchor Church" in the region. (Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez).*

Board member **Gayle Davis** introduced MCCNY's special celebration of **Kwanzaa** Sunday. Then, as members and friends of the church's **Christians of African Descent (CAD)** ministry (chaired by **Deacon Carolyn Parker**) sprinkled the libation and lit the 7 Kwanzaa candles, they testified about the meaning of each of the Kwanzaa principles to them as queer people of color..... Among the members of **MCCNY's Asian Pacific Islander (API)** ministry who played leading roles in Worship Services on Lunar New Year Sunday were Board member **Susie Chin** and **Boone Young**. Look for more special events featuring MCCNY's API ministry in May, when the church celebrates **Asian-Pacific Islander Month**.... In his recent appearance as a guest preacher at MCCNY, **Rev. Durrell Watkins**, Pastor of Christ the Liberator MCC in East Brunswick, NJ, demonstrated why Sunday attendance at his church has tripled (to nearly 100) since he arrived there: with his forceful, delightfully fast-talking style, he told the truth about certain notorious right-wing "fundamentalist preachers"……You never know what you'll miss if you skip church on Sunday: **David Raleigh** recently arranged for a surprise soloist – the famous star **Brian Lane Green** (featured in April's Out magazine) – who performed new, original spiritual-themed works plus classic hymns including "All to Jesus I Surrender"…..**Russell Murphy**, devoted longtime member and a former Deacon at MCCNY, has been elected Vice President for Member Services of **InterPride**, the coalition of more than 120 LGBT Pride organizations worldwide whose events are attended by more than 18 million people a year. Russell has held every important position at **Heritage of Pride** (HOP), which conducts the June Pride festivities here in NYC, and he is a stalwart volunteer for numerous queer causes. MCCNY **Deacon Buddy Seaton** is another well-known HOP volunteer……**The 31st anniversary of the founding of MCCNY** on Epiphany Sunday in January 1972 was an occasion for celebration and thoughts about the church's founding Pastor, **the late Rev. Howard Wells**. Rev. Pat reminded the congregation that he arrived in NYC with nothing but a Bible, trust in God, and instructions from Rev. Troy Perry to get an MCC up and running. Also fondly brought to mind at the anniversary celebration was the **late Mac McCarty**, a founding member of MCCNY. Mac passed away last year and ***REMEMBERED THE CHURCH IN HIS WILL; that's a very good idea and example for all of us!***

DANIEL BRENNA *at a recital in Finland last month. Before taking their performance to Europe, Daniel and his piano accompanist* ***Djordje Nesic*** *held a benefit recital in NYC in February that raised more than $1,400 for MCCNY's Capital Campaign. Daniel performed vocal works by Mozart, Rachmaninov, Kilpinen, Sibelius, Weill and Kander. Daniel is an award-winning world-class tenor who sings in the choir and as a soloist at MCCNY Worship Services.*

WHO'S WHO AT MCCNY:

The Reverend Pat Bumgardner	Pastor
Deacon Malcolm W. Smith	Personal Assistant to the Pastor
The Reverend Kristen Klein-Cechettini	Asst. Pastor for Congregational Life
The Reverend Robin Gorsline	Director of Religious Education
The Reverend Tawnee Walling	Dir. of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry
Ms. Luisa Soriano	Asst. to the Director
Candidate for the Ministry Jen Hoffman	Web Site Manager, Religious Education
Candidate for the Ministry Michael Hydes	Video Ministry, Sunday School
Candidate for the Ministry W. Franc Perry	Wednesday Celebrations
Deacon Danny Gonzalez-Feliciano	Arcoiris Ministerio
Deacon Marvin Bagwell	
Deacon N. Buddy Seaton	Usher
Deacon Vernon Bruette	
Deacon Sandy Hernandez	
Deacon Brenton Buchannan	
Deacon Jorge Blondett	
Deacon Montel Cherry	Ministry of Appreciation
Deacon Enez Cooper	
Deacon Tyrone Jackson	Men's Programming
Deacon Jesus Montoya	
Deacon Carolyn Parker	Christians of African Descent
Deacon Len Richardson	Video Ministry
Deacon Norma Sharp	
Deacon Michelle Slack	
Deacon Bali White	
Board Of Directors	
Mr. Joe Kennedy	Scribe
Mr. Jose Burgos	Treasurer
Ms. Gayle Davis	Asst. Treasurer
Ms. Rita Saylor	Office Liason
Mr. Andre Moreira	Office Liason
Ms. Susie Chin	Insurance Liason
Mr. Steven Rodick	Building Maintenance Liason
Mr. Luis Rodriguez	Building Maintenance Liason
Mr. Jeff Bornheimer	Capital Campaign Liason

Clergy and Board Members can be e-mailed directly through the church's website, www.mccny.org

Valentine's Day, prompting ***The New York Times*** to headline in its main news section, **"Gay Couples Pop Big Question, But the States' Reply Is the Same." The Times** reported that the Founder and Moderator of the MCC denomination, **Rev. Troy Perry**, and his spouse, **Philip Ray DeBlieck,** sought their marriage license in Los Angeles, while the Pastor of MCC Hartford, Rev. George Chien, and his spouse Rev. Julio Flores, sought their license in the Connecticut capital where the Legislature is considering a measure legalizing same-sex marriage.

Here in New York, **Rev. Pat** was one of the featured speakers at a **Marriage Equality** event at the LGBT Community Services Center where **State Sen. Tom Duane** and **Assemblymember Richard Gottfried** announced that they will introduce a **Right to Marry** bill in both houses of the New York State Legislature this month. Rev. Pat told the cheering crowd at the rally some of the reasons marriage rights are "not trivial," including the plight of a survivor whose spouse has died when there is no legal recognition of the relationship.

MCCNY's Social Justice ministry invites you to enlist in our ongoing and escalating campaign for marriage equality for same-sex couples.

Some of the protesters for same-sex marriage rights at the New York City Clerk's office on Valentine's Day. Pastoral spouse ***Mary Jane Gibney*** *(second from left in picture) and* ***Rev. Pat Bumgardner*** *flank the "Marriage License Bureau" sign. (Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez).*

Homeless Queer Youth Shelter at MCCNY Under New Management: the Church's

The **Homeless Queer Youth Shelter** at MCCNY is now run directly by the church – just as the **Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry** at MCCNY always has been. The Shelter serves LGBTQ young people who have been kicked out penniless onto the streets by their families of origin because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. To visit the Shelter at MCCNY and observe first-hand the desperate situation of these young people is a heart-rending experience that no words can convey; to witness what the Shelter does for them is truly one of the most heart-warming experiences one will ever have.

The Shelter is open from 11 p.m. to 8 a.m. every day of the week. Its full-time adult staff includes MCC Candidate for the Ordained Ministry **Michael Hydes**, who recently preached a moving sermon about his experiences as a teen-ager when, as a result of the discovery by religious authorities that he was gay, he was abruptly fired from his job, thrown out of the place where he was living and dumped on the street – literally spat upon – without friends or support of any kind. Sadly, that is the situation that many of the youths Michael now serves at the Shelter find themselves in. MCCNY's unique Shelter is their only refuge.

While **Rev. Tawnee Walling** has applied for outside long-term funding for the shelter, ***contributions from members and friends of the LGBT community for this vital social service are needed NOW*** to keep it open until those grants come through. ***Please send your checks to Metropolitan Community Church, 446 West 36th Street, NY NY 10018, marked Attention Homeless Youth Shelter***, or call the church office at 212 629-7440 for more information on how you can contribute.

When the Homeless Queer Youth Shelter opened on June 16, 2002, it was – as the Newsletter reported at the time – a joint venture of MCCNY (which provided the space and other amenities) and the Ali Forney Center run by Carl Siciliano (which provided the staffing and financial support from grants). In February 2003, the Ali Forney Center decided to focus on youths who are prepared to live in an apartment-type setting, and consequently the Ali Forney Center with its staff and funding moved to a 2-room apartment at 807 Ninth Ave. MCCNY then assumed full responsibility for managing the drop-in Shelter at the church for homeless queer kids from the street. Even (especially!) in these difficult economic times, won't you please open your heart and wallet to provide shelter and a safe space for these young people who are the most vulnerable among us? (As of press time, the generosity and efforts of MCCNY's congregants have raised $13,025 for the Shelter, including a $5,000 grant obtained by **Daniel Brenna** from his employer. Now it's YOUR turn to contribute).

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHARITIES OF NEW YORK INCORPORATED: It's official: Corporations, foundations and other large donors can now give tax-exempt contributions to **Metropolitan Community Charities of New York**, a non-profit **Community Development Corporation** (CDC) established to fund – and greatly expand – the church's social services agencies such as the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry and the Homeless Queer Youth Shelter. This is closely linked to the Capital Campaign for a bigger, better home. For more information, contact **Deacon Malcolm Smith** in the church office at 212 629-7440 or email Malcolm@mccny.org. Thanks are in order to **Bob France**, an attorney and MCCNY member on the Capital Campaign Committee, and **Luis Rodriguez**, an attorney and MCCNY Board Member, for their successful work in getting the CDC incorporated, and to the Capital Campaign chair, Candidate for the Ordained Ministry **Franc Perry** (also an attorney, by the way), and his volunteers who are actively soliciting grants at this time.

ART SALE BENEFITS METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHARITIES: ***Andre Moreira & Jerome Dumaine*** *file this report:* Tom Cleveland from **OmnifineArt** has extended an offer to help raise money. For each item purchased directly from OmnifineArt, the purchaser will receive a **20% discount** off the retail price and **30% of the retail price will go to MCCNY's new CDC**. All you have to do is mention MCCNY at the time of the purchase. OmnifineArt has exclusive reproduction rights from the entire collection of the Smithsonian and other fine museums around the world, and they also sell art from young painters and sculptors. Check the OmnifineArt website www.omnifineart.com or call toll-free 1-800-666-4131, ext. 236. Thanks to **Tom Cleveland** and **David Chin** of OmnifineArt for this generous offer. Andre & Jerome emphasize this a great deal for art buyers and for the church. They appeal to everyone in the congregation who knows people in the decoration and interior design industries to spread the word about this offer.

ARCOIRIS [RAINBOW] LATINO/A MINISTRY CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY: ***Rich Torres,*** *the Coordinator of MCCNY's Arcoiris ministry, files this report:* Arcoiris Latino/a de Cristo (ALC) is thrilled to be arriving at its first anniversary. In this short time, by volunteering our talents and resources, we have managed to blossom into a vital and voracious ministry to MCCNY and our community at large thanks to the generosity of its participants and friends. We provide an outlet for fellowship and emotional refuge to all identified Latinos/as with a mix of social and spiritual nourishment for the soul, and it has been working for us.

Our "Circulo de Oracion" [Circle of Prayer] has become oxygen for those who feel disenfranchised from religious traditions. Our makeup widely varies culturally, economically, and academically, but everyone's participation is equally valued, and the trust and confidence we build during prayer evokes the Holy Spirit. We read the biblical passages from the Sunday Worship Service and expound on its meaning and relevance to our identity and in our relationships.

"Papo's Movie Night" has grown exponentially throughout the year, bringing together an even wider variety of populations in a friendly and accepting environment. Movies are chosen by vote but no one is ever bound to the choice. Dinner is always and event, and you never know who you might meet.

Dominican, Puerto Rican, Mexican, South American – whatever the region – our holidays are well represented and celebrated with food, music and tradition. All in all, not a bad start.

We look forward now to a new year with more events like "Noche de Oracion y Vasilon" [Evening of Prayer and Party] and "La Palabra a la Playa" [the Word at the Beach] and cultural field trips to museums, theater and other places of worship like local meditation centers and reading rooms. We hope for even greater participation among a wider variety of the Latino/a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and straight community who wish to break boundaries for prayer and fellowship. We will continue Latino/a outreach and support other MCCNY ministries. We need your help, support and participation.

(To read this article in Spanish, see the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org.
(Para leer este artículo en español, pueden verlo en la carta de noticias en línea www.mccny.org)

Camaraderie reigns whenever MCCNY's Arcoiris Latino/a ministry gets together.

Martin Luther King Day Observed:

Celebrating Dr. King's birthday, 250 sing "We Shall Overcome." To the left immediately behind ***Rev. Kristen Klien-Cechettini*** *is* ***City Councilmember Phil Reed.***

MCCNY hosted New York City's 6th annual LGBT Interfaith Celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday in January. MCCNY's 250-seat sanctuary was packed for the two-and-a-half-hour long service, which is co-sponsored each year by the city's 3 largest LGBT congregations: MCCNY, Unity Fellowship Church (UFC), and Congregation Beth Simchat Torah (CBST), the nation's largest LGBT synagogue. Speakers included **Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum** of CBST, **Rev. Jeff Haskins** and **Rev. Gale Jones** of UFC, and Rev. Pat Bumgardner of MCCNY. **The Lavender Light Gospel Choir** and the choirs of co-sponsoring congregations sang. **MCCNY's choir** under the superb direction of **John Fischer** gave an especially beautiful performance.

Those present signed letters to the President of the United States demanding immediate freedom for 13 African-Americans who are in jail in Tulia, TX on phony, trumped-up racist-motivated charges.

In her statement from the pulpit, Rabbi Kleinbaum sharply criticized President Bush for using the actual date of Dr. King's birthday to make a statement opposing the University of Michigan's affirmative action policy. Like all the speakers, Rabbi Kleinbaum called for greater recognition of the historic role that **Bayard Rustin**, a gay man, played in the civil rights movement.

Rev. Haskins of UFC in Brooklyn recalled attending the 1963 March on Washington as a 10-year-old and preparing sandwiches to serve the marchers. He too lauded Bayard Rustin's major influence on Dr. King and his position as the principal organizer of the March on Washington. Rev. Jones of UFC in Manhattan noted that her congregation is the "baby" of the interfaith celebration's co-sponsors, observing its first anniversary in this month **when MCCNY celebrates its 31st anniversary** and CBST its 30th. Rev. Jones proclaimed the importance of keeping in mind the heroic deeds of "the ancestors" – both the Africans who remained steadfast even in the holds of slave ships coming to these shores hundreds of years ago, and the LGBT rebels who rose up in the **Stonewall Riots** of June 1969. She lamented that some young folks today enjoy the freedoms and privileges that the black civil rights and LGBT liberation struggles made possible without acknowledging their debt to those ancestors. Like the other speakers at the event, Rev. Jones also called upon everyone in the LGBT community to **stand up more strongly for transgender people** in our community.

Pastor Bumgardner, remembering Dr. King's impassioned words about "the fierce urgency of NOW," declared there are urgent crises we face now, today as well. Describing Dr. King as not merely a dreamer but a "doer" with a great sense of strategy to accomplish his goals, she called for similar action today against the evils of poverty, disease, looming war and lingering racism. Citing the outrageous miscarriage of justice in **Tulia, TX**, she exhorted those present not to leave until they had signed a letter to the President demanding immediate freedom for the 13 people wrongly jailed there.

The celebration opened with everyone singing the unofficial African-American anthem, **"Lift Every Voice and Sing,"** and concluded with an emotional rendition of the black civil rights movement's anthem, **"We Shall Overcome."** After the service, **MCCNY's Christians of African Descent (CAD)** ministry hosted a lavish reception with a buffet dinner in the social hall.

At a reception after the service, ***Rev. Pat Bumgardner*** *of MCCNY, and* ***Rev. Gale Jones*** *and* ***Rev. Jeff Haskins*** *of Unity Fellowship Church cut a cake donated by Congregation Beth Simchat Torah. Inscription on the cake reads, "Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., 1929-1968, Your Dream Lives On!" (MLK celebration photos by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)*

WHO'S WHO IN THE MUSIC MINISTRY: *Question*: Why does MCCNY keep growing? Why has formal membership grown to more than 400 and average Sunday attendance to over 300 (not counting special days like Easter when it tops 500)? *Answer*: Surveys say the two things that bring more and more people to Sunday Worship Services at this church are (1) the dynamic preaching of **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and (2) **THE OUTSTANDING MUSICIANS.** Here's who they are: ***MUSIC DIRECTOR:*** John Fischer. ***MORNING CHOIR:*** Claude Ashby, Andy Baker, Alva Bostick, Chris Baker, Daniel Brenna, JD Brown, Vernon Bruette, Susan Chilvers, Frank Cruz, Michael Dain, John Fischer, Michaelangelo Galloza, Rick Hamilton, Jay Hayden, Bev Heath, Eric James, Brian Locklear, Lucky Michaels, Rosemarie Napoli, Tuan Nguyen, Julius Njanjala, Krister Paakonen, Philip Pares, Franc Perry, Julius Petty, Karen Petty, David Raleigh, Victor Rodriguez, Norma Sharp, Michelle Slack, Bill Vila, James Walters. ***EVENING CHOIR:*** Claude Ashby, Carolyn Eufrasio, John Fischer, Denise Janssen, Wan-Chuan Kao, Jonathan Lebolt, Sarah Lewis, Michael Maher, John McGee, Rosemarie Napoli, Daniel Neusom, Julius Njanjala, Basil Rodericks, Buddy Seaton, Alex Weymann. ***SPECIAL MUSICIANS:*** Annie Bostick-Heath, Corrine Bertram, Andy Buck, Alva Bostick, Daniel Brenna, JD Brown, Frank Cruz, Bradley Curry, Carolyn Eufrasio, John Fischer, Dan Gorgolioni, Rick Hamilton, Bev Heath, Jen Hoffman, Bob Hollinger, Eric James, Wan-Chuan Kao, Jonathan Lebolt, Sarah Lewis, Rick Liebert, Ayana Lowe, Rosemarie Napoli, Daniel Neusom, Krister Paakonen, Franc Perry, Julius Petty, David Raleigh, David Raleigh's Little Big Band, Buddy Seaton, Michelle Slack, Colleen Sovory, Bill Vila, Alex Weymann. *(Photo below by Deacon Danny Gonzalez).*

"Make a joyful noise to God... Sing the glory of God's name..."
Psalm 66:1-2

Check out the Website:
www.helpbuildagaychurch.com

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

The QUERY Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

June, 2003

The rainbow flag flies year-round outside Metropolitan Community Church, where EVERY month is LGBT Pride Month. (Photo by Bill Vila).

Wear YELLOW or RED if you can
To match the colors of the float and give our contingent a distinctive look.

- **March with pride, Wave a flag, Carry a banner, Hail the cheering people**
- **Enjoy the throbbing Gospel-music beat of DAVID RALEIGH'S BAND and the MCCNY Choir directed by JOHN FISCHER – their music is always a huge crowd-pleaser (and usually a prize-winner with the judges on the reviewing stand too!)**
- **Greet the throngs lining the parade route as they clamor for MCCNY's popular YELLOW and RED stickers, a staple of NYC Pride – tens of thousands are printed every year but it's never enough. There's one for every taste:**

Visit the website: www.helpbuildagaychurch.com
Online donations now being accepted – See page 7

Pastor's Pride Proclamation

by Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Dear friends:

"Peace through Pride" is the theme of this year's celebration in New York City, and I can think of no place on earth, no people, no movement in history that gives me greater peace or a deeper sense of pride than Metropolitan Community Church of New York and those who find a spiritual home here.

I don't say thus lightly or without thought.

The lines are clearly drawn for our siblings in Puerto Rico as they seek to repeal Article 103 of the penal code criminalizing "sodomy."

Our brother in Malaysia, Anwar Ibrahim, may indeed serve 15 years in jail because of the jealousy of his political rivals who knew that being Queer could cost him his career and maybe even his life.

The retrial of the "Cairo 52" produced 21 convictions and a continued escalation of the harassment and systematic entrapment of Queer or Queer-looking (whatever that may mean) men in Egypt.

And here at home, we are left to mourn the death of a 15-year old Queer child stabbed to death for resisting unwanted advances by an adult who held our identity as license for assault.

The peace I am talking about is not the absence of conflict or its resolution. – St. Augustine wrote, "Our hearts are restless until they rest in thee, O God." – The peace I am talking about comes in the midst of turmoil and violence. It's the peace that passes all understanding, as Scripture says, because it is not contingent on legislative victory or penal code revision or even safety and security. It's only requisite is that I/we be absolutely certain that God is with us, and loves us, and always works in and through us for what is right and just and good. Queer people are God's people. Those are spiritual truths I learned here – and they have set my heart free from the constant turmoil and conflict the world inflicts. I'm not dismissing the impact of all that we currently live through and suffer under. I'm simply saying, I find my hope and the courage I need to stand up and speak up and act in these truths. I find my peace here with those who've come to know and understand that being Queer is a gift of God.

"Peace through Pride" – I'm very proud of this community of faith, of you, of all we are blessed to offer the wider community around us – and most of all, of the faith that has set us free. I'm praying that when we come to Church on Pride Sunday and when we take to the streets later that day, we will do so with the peaceful assurance that God has never given up on our people or working for good in all things – and neither should we.

With love,

Rev. Pat

Newsletter Close-up: Inside Sylvia's Place Shelter for Homeless LGBTQ Youths

by Beth Kling

*Editor's note: Concerned that the hard economic times we all are facing these days might have an adverse impact on contributions to MCCNY's essential social service ministries such as the **Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry** (named for the Stonewall veteran and legendary activist who ran it until her death in February 2002) and the newer **Sylvia's Place Shelter** for homeless LGBTQ youths, several congregants spoke up with a suggestion: If only, they said, if only the Newsletter would present a close-up portrait of what these ministries really do – put a human face on the people whose lives depend on them – then surely, these congregants said, surely Newsletter readers would make the sacrifice needed to respond with great generosity – hard times or no. We trust you will prove these congregants correct: please read this Newsletter Close-up, then **make a donation to the Sylvia's Place Shelter**, c/o Metropolitan Community Church, 446 W. 36th St., NY NY 10018. **Rev. Tawnee Walling** is Development Director of **Metropolitan Community Charities of NY** and Director of the **Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry**.*

*The Query Newsletter is honored to welcome to the ranks of our correspondents **BETH KLING**, a distinguished professional writer whose work has appeared in the newsletters of SAGE (Seniors Active in a Gay Environment) and other organizations.*

"There's something really beautiful about knowing the space is being used all the time," said **Rev. Tawnee Walling**, referring to the church's first floor social hall, where MCC recently opened a homeless youth shelter. Every night between 11 PM and 8 AM, the shelter provides cots, meals, and a place to stay for six LGBTQ homeless youths between the ages of 17 and 23.

Named "Sylvia's Place" – after Sylvia Rivera, the Stonewall veteran and LGBT-activist whose name also graces the church's food pantry – the shelter provides a crucial service for an incredibly vulnerable population. LGBTQ youths make up an astounding 35 percent of the 20,000 homeless young people in New York City alone. They are at a disproportionate risk for violence, drug and alcohol addiction, HIV infection, and suicide – and almost no social services exist to address their needs. Furthermore, a recent study concluded that as many as 70 percent of LGBTQ youths in foster care, group homes, and non-queer-centric shelters have experienced violence as a result of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Sylvia Rivera felt strongly that the church should help these young people – by offering them a place to sleep, food to eat, and the support of our community. On her deathbed, she made a plea to Rev. Pat to open a shelter. The church responded, first by offering space to a six-bed shelter starting in June 2002 – and then by opening Sylvia's Place in March 2003.

Sylvia's Place – A Remedy

"Almost all of our clients come here with the sense that they don't belong anywhere," explained Tanino Minneci, one of three counselors on staff at Sylvia's Place. Whether they come directly from home, another living situation, or a different shelter, almost all the young people who arrive at Sylvia's Place "feel like nobody wants them."

They often have good reason to feel this way. Lucky Michaels, also a counselor at Sylvia's Place, said some of the youths have been disowned by families because of their sexual orientation, and some have lost everything through a string of bad luck and contact with horrible people. Michael Hydes, shelter counselor and Candidate for the Ministry, added that in some situations, abuse at home was so extreme that the decision to leave was simply "the better of two terrible options."

At its most basic, Sylvia's Place offers these young people a place to stay. Whether they decide to settle for indefinite periods or show up last minute for one night only, homeless youths have a

www.helpbuildagaychurch.com:

NEW WEBSITE RAISES AWARENESS AND MONEY

MARK MCNEASE, former editor of The Query Newsletter, has set up an Internet site *(www.helpbuildagaychurch.com)* that carries the good news about MCCNY, its social service ministries and its plans for expansion to the whole wide world – and instantly **accepts contributions online** from Web surfers anywhere around the globe. The website has already started receiving donations. Anyone with a credit card and Internet access can now send offerings directly to the church. As Mark points out in the following advisory, this website is a phenomenal outreach and fund-raising opportunity for the MCCNY:

TRUMPETS PLEASE! MCCNY Capital Campaign launches its fundraising website! By Mark McNease

How You Can Help…

Be a traffic director! E-mail your friends, families, loved ones, and supporters everywhere and say, Hey, we need your help. Check out this website, follow the simple instructions for sending donations (checks and credit cards gratefully accepted), and "Help us build a bigger church to serve a bigger vision!" We'll be promoting the site at every opportunity and so can you. The Internet is a vast sea of possibility and it's time we cast our nets. This gives MCCNY regulars as well as LGBTQ folks from coast to coast who want to make a difference the chance to. So spread the word! Together we can make our dream come true!

REV. ELDER HONG TAN'S VISIT HIGHLIGHTS ASIAN-PACIFIC ISLANDER MONTH CELEBRATION

Traveling thousands of miles to guest preach in MCCNY's pulpit, **Rev. Elder Hong Tan** (in photo at left, by Deacon Danny Gonzalez) visited on Memorial Day weekend, bringing the church's celebration of May as Asian-Pacific Islander month to a fitting conclusion. It was a privilege for the congregation to host Rev. Hong, who is the highest-ranking Asian-Pacific Islander in the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination – and a pleasure, too, as his sermons are filled with generous doses of humor as well as insight.

Another popular version of the MCCNY sticker.

People in the News

Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline, MCCNY's Director of Religious Education for the last 2 years, has received a call to become Pastor of MCC in Richmond, VA. He assumes his duties there in July. Congratulations, Rev. Robin…. Former Deacon **Russell Murphy** donates the church's supply of rainbow LGBT Pride flags (as seen in the photo atop Page One)…. Follow-up on the RIGHT TO MARRY report in the April Newsletter: With the pro-bono assistance of attorney **Ted Bohn**, same-sex couples from MCCNY have officially filed Article 78 petitions challenging the City Clerk's action. City Clerk **Vincent Robles** wrote a polite letter to **Pastor Bumgardner** saying the church's complaint about the denial of marriage license applications to same-couples has been submitted to his counsel for review. But he cautioned the review might take a while….**Mel Bryant & Bradley Curry** (already known for their special music contributions at Worship Services) created – and staffed – an attractive new **outreach booth** for MCCNY that made its debut at this spring's **LGBT Expo** at the Javits Center, showcasing this LGBT church to thousands of Expo-goers….Emory Edwards, Ali Stafford, Bill Nave, Helen Love and Susan Chilvers ask that this summer reminder be taken to heart: *"Don't let the hot summer weather melt your pledge! The church's bills don't take a vacation, so please keep up your tithes and offerings!"* Amen to that….**Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry** was the subject of a candid page and half long profile in the April 25-May 1 edition of *Gay City News* by that paper's editor-in-chief **Paul Schindler**….To see just how ubiquitous MCCNY's "*God Made Me*" stickers have become, check out the new book ***The Last Sunday in June***, published by Powerhouse Books. It contains photos of Pride Day, and it's available at LGBT bookstores and Barnes & Noble. The front cover of the book and no fewer than six pictures inside feature various Pride participants sporting the MCCNY stickers. The logo and stickers were designed by the church's volunteer advertising manager, **Howard Herrera**.

Volunteer staff of The Query Newsletter:

Editor . . . . . Joe Kennedy
Graphic Design & Layout Editor . . Les LaRue
Mailing/Circulation Manager . . . Michael Dain

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Unless otherwise specified, Newsletter articles are written by the editor.

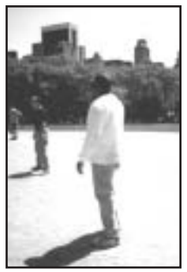
‘FASHION ON GENDER’ SHOW BREAKS NEW GROUND AND BRINGS IN $900 FOR MCCNY’S SYLVIA RIVERA FOOD PANTRY

It would be true to report that the "Fashion on Gender" transgender charity fashion show organized by **MOSHAY MOSES** and held at MCCNY on May 20th raised $900 for the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry. But it wouldn’t be the WHOLE truth. For "Fashion on Gender" did far more than that. The 20 performers and models and the 100-plus who lined the runway to cheer them on for two hours were part of an experience that broke new ground in gender liberation and gave new meaning to the words "Be proud of who you really are!" Exiting after the show, one attendee summed up the thoughts of many: "That was unique. There’s no place else like this for freedom and diversity! *Only at MCC!!*" MC’ing the event was club super-sensation **FLOTILLA DEBARGE** (could ever a week go by without her picture and bold-face name appearing in chronicles of our tribe like *Next* and *HX*?). *“Fashion on Gender” photos by CHRIS BAKER*

MCCNY’S MEN’S GROUP PLAYS SOFTBALL IN CENTRAL PARK

The MCCNY Men’s Group, Coordinated by Board member **Steven Rodick**, continues providing a wide variety of events for all self-identified men in the congregation. Upcoming highlights include a summer POOL PARTY on Long Island. Frank DiMarco recently secured from the NYC Parks Department use of one of Central Park’s highly-coveted ball fields for the group’s spring softball outing. About 20 guys from church showed up and divided themselves into two teams of friendly rivals for the game. There were a number of outstanding players in the game who proved how right *Instinct* magazine was when it reported in its May issue that gay males are often better athletes than their non-gay counterparts. *Softball photos by JOE KENNEDY*

Batters up…



Anticipation…and action in the infield.

The runner slides, the dust flies at 2nd base.

place to turn for safety, warmth, food, and companionship. Sylvia’s Place is a rare and life-saving godsend in this respect – it is an LGBTQ-centric shelter for homeless young people in New York City that has a ***drop-in, emergency component***. So long as space is available, a homeless youth who arrives by midnight will have a bed for the night.

The client will also get dinner (sandwiches donated by the Food Pantry or a meal prepared by a counselor); clean bedding and towels; toiletries; access to a shower, bathroom, and washing machine; donated clothing; and breakfast in the morning. And the individual will have the chance to talk with counselors, socialize, and develop friendships with the other young people in residence.

As Lucky and Tanino explained, the young people at the shelter also have the opportunity to be part of a community, or "family," as close relationships develop among clients and staff. But it is a family in its best sense – a group of people who live together, share responsibilities, support and love one another, with each individual playing a unique role. "For some of these kids, this shelter is all they have," said Lucky. "We are their home, their parents, their family. They know we care about them."

In addition – and to an even greater extent than in a biological family – the members learn from one another, even if they sometimes disagree. The group is characterized by wide diversity in racial, ethnic, and geographical background; sexual orientation (some residents identify as straight, as well as LGBTQ); gender and gender identity; and personal life experiences. These differences make for a lot of learning opportunities.

"They all come together," Lucky said, "and everyone becomes accepting of different points of view." Maybe most surprising is the effect this experience has on straight young people who enter the shelter feeling uncomfortable around LGBTs. "They’ve become totally cool with queer people," Lucky explained. "Being forced to live and work together, they learn to trust each other very quickly. They learn it’s okay to be gay, straight, whatever you are or want to be."

A Safe Place and an Alternative

"Even though it’s a shelter, it’s a good place to be. I can feel comfortable here," said Mario, an 18-year-old homeless youth who has been living at Sylvia’s Place for several weeks. Mario became homeless four months ago when his grandmother passed away. She had raised him from the time he was a young child in the Cape Verde Islands. The two moved to Boston six years ago. After his grandmother’s death, Mario stayed with friends and then headed to New York by bus. He found the shelter on his first night in the city.

"I feel safe here; I don’t feel like anything bad will happen," he said. He explained that he has heard gruesome stories of life in other shelters. Residents have violent fights, and some get stabbed; others steal from you; some stumble in drunk and pass out. "Here, people have stupid arguments," he said, "but it’s safe." Mario also praises the shelter staff, who treat the clients with concern and understanding.

"We really do our best to treat the clients with respect," explained Tanino. "We try to let them know that we see them as perfectly capable, active, wonderful people who have just had the misfortune of getting into bad circumstances." This approach, he believes, gives the young people a feeling of hope that their situation can improve. It also helps to reverse some of the negative self-images many have when they enter the shelter.

"Since being at the shelter, several seem more confident and motivated to get out of this situation and find a better place for themselves," said Tanino. Many of the current repeat clientele are already in the process of finalizing plans for new living situations. "A good majority seem really close to reaching that goal."

Sylvia’s Place also provides an alternative to the drugs, alcohol, and other potentially dangerous activities so common to street life. The rules for staying at the shelter are basic – no alcohol, drugs, sex, or violence. Whatever behaviors some may engage in when they’re on the street – prostitution to make money, drug or alcohol use to avoid pain or difficult circumstances – are not available to them once inside the shelter. The experience of living without these activities, even for a short period, can be helpful.

"They see how much happier they are in the shelter without these things," Lucky explained. "It pushes them to try to better their lives."

The Role of MCC

"People are really excited about it," said Rev. Tawnee, explaining that members of MCC’s congregation have donated money, clothing, toiletries, and bedding to the shelter. Sylvia’s Place greatly appreciates this assistance and also welcomes continued support in many varieties from the entire church community.

The shelter requires additional financial assistance, though, and efforts are underway to try to get that help. First, with the help of Bob France and other volunteers, the church has developed a community development corporation – called Metropolitan Community Charities – to administer the shelter. Under the umbrella of this nonprofit organization, Rev. Tawnee is working with volunteers to apply for grant money from foundations and governmental sources.

In addition to continuing the current level of services, Rev. Tawnee is seeking money to expand the shelter’s programming, including establishing a more extensive referral component. That way, counselors will be able to help clients access a wide range of resources throughout the city, such as job training, GED programs, more permanent housing, and addiction counseling. Currently, counselors work with other LGBT youth agencies to help the young people, but the level of collaboration needs to be further developed and expanded.

Long-term goals for Sylvia’s Place involve opening a facility with space for 60 young people. And the services provided would include access to technical training, mental health counseling, and a range of other types of support, in addition to housing and meals.

In the meantime, Sylvia’s Place will continue to open its doors to six LGBT young people each night – helping some very vulnerable individuals and gaining benefits for the church community in the process. "We get a lot out of doing this," said Rev. Tawnee, "and it’s great having young people in the building." Mario attends morning and evening services, assists in the food pantry, and helps clean the building on Thursdays.

"I feel like I’m helping," he said, "and they help me by letting me stay here."

PALM SUNDAY

Rev. Pat blesses the palms. (at left) The choir sings "Hosannas." (above)

GOOD FRIDAY

Lavender Light Gospel Choir (including several MCCNY members) praises Jesus.

Rev. Pat lights the New Fire. (at left) Cantor Eric James (below) chants the Easter Proclamation ("Rejoice…").

EASTER VIGIL

EASTER MORN

The congregation (which overflowed the sanctuary) celebrates in song. (at left) Lesbians in Easter bonnets. (below)

Easter photos by DEACON DANNY GONZALEZ

AWARDS BANQUET HONORS LGBTQ MUSLIMS AND 'BROADWAY CARES'

MCCNY Pastor Rev. Pat Bumgardner welcomes the hundreds who filled the grand refectory at Union Theological Seminary for the church's annual Awards Banquet.
(Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez).

Faisal Alam, 25, Founder (in 1998) and Director of Al-Fatiha Foundation for LGBTQ Muslims; Rev. Troy D. Perry, 62, Founder (in 1968) and Moderator of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination; and Rev. Pat Bumgardner, 50, Pastor of MCC New York for 16 years, in a photo op at the Awards Banquet. Like many of Deacon Danny Gonzalez's pictures, this one was published in the LGBT press.

Rev. Pat presents the 2nd annual Sylvia Rivera Social Justice (Faith in Action) Award to Faisal Alam, one of the foremost young LGBT activist leaders. The Pastor described his willingness to risk his life for the sake of justice and human liberation. Faisal (who was a guest speaker at MCCNY's pulpit several years ago) recalled in his remarks at the banquet that when he first met Rev. Troy Perry after the founding of Al-Fatiha, Rev. Perry greeted him with an enthusiastic, "We've been waiting for you!" *(Photo by Lucky Michaels).*

Rev. Pat presents an Award Plaque to the other official honoree at the banquet, "Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS," which Rev. Pat praised for their long-term commitment in the battle against AIDS. She noted "Broadway Cares" has raised more than $65 million for AIDS-related causes. Accepting on behalf of "Broadway Cares," the organization's Executive Director Tom Viola cited MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry (which serves 10,000 people a month, including people living with AIDS and other people in need) as one of the good works his organization is pleased to support. *(Photo by Lucky Michaels).*

There were two surprise awards to members of MCCNY's own community of faith. Board member Rita Saylor and her spouse Lynn Scott were thanked for co-chairing the committee that organized last October's extravaganza at the Copa that raised $80,000 for the church's Capital Campaign.
(Photo by Lucky Michaels).

Visiting from his home in Vermont, former Board member Bob Wolff received a hero's welcome and a surprise award. In the day, Bob constructed the altar backdrop and pulpit in the sanctuary and the cross over the stairwell, donated the hymnals, obtained and put up the signboard on the church's exterior wall, etc. Recently recovered by God's grace from serious illness, he came bearing another gift – a big Welcome Center/display case – and good news about the founding of a new MCC church in Vermont. *(Photo by Lucky Michaels).*

Going over the entertainment schedule for the Awards Banquet with Rev. Pat are MCCNY's Music Director extraordinaire John Fischer and choir member Carolyn Eufrasio, the magnificent soprano with the powerful voice whose solos invariably bring down the house. John and Carolyn are known to music-lovers beyond the church as the popular duo SHIMMERPLANET. As of press time, SHIMMERPLANET is up to #3 on the charts at www.Outvoice.net. Their CD can be ordered at www.shimmerplanet.com. *(Photo by Lucky Michaels).*

Michael Dain, The Query Newsletter's mailing/circulation manager, with Rev. Troy Perry, who will be retiring in 2005 as Moderator of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination he founded 35 years ago.
(Photo by Bill Vila).

Deacon Danny Gonzalez, the Newsletter's chief photographer (appearing on the other side of the camera for a change), with Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, MCCNY's Assistant Pastor. At the Easter Vigil liturgy, Rev. Kristen and Deacon Danny donned their vestments and presided at the altar in a beautiful bilingual Spanish/English celebration of the Sacrament of Communion.
(Photo by Bill Vila).

Chris Baker (Chair of the Metro Bears club, and another professional photographer) with his spouse, MCC Candidate for the Ordained Ministry Michael Hydes. Since coming aboard at the church full-time, Michael's myriad duties include directing the Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths, teaching the children's Sunday School, editing the weekly tape-delay telecast of MCCNY's Worship Services (seen throughout Manhattan from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. every Sunday on Time-Warner channel 57 and RCN ch. 101), and serving as the Pastoral Staff liaison to the Men's Group. *(Photo by Bill Vila).*

MCCNY's oldest and youngest congregants: Dorothy John, 91, frequently sits in a pew near the front on Sunday mornings – and she absolutely NEVER but NEVER misses her weekly Thursday morning volunteer stint at the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry. Proudly showing off newborns are (bottom) Board member and foster parent Jeff Bornheimer, and (top) Jerome Dermaine, one of baby Alexandre's fathers; the other dad, busy working the crowd at the banquet when the photo was snapped, is Board member Dr. Andre Moreira. Jerome and Andre recently opened their lovely home for a special Capital Campaign fund-raiser.
(Photo by Lucky Michaels).

THE QUERY NEWSLETTER

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

SEPTEMBER, 2003

Built in 1887 as a "German Gospel Tabernacle" Church, it was bought by MCCNY in 1993. But now it's not half big enough for MCCNY's growing congregation and expanding social services ministries. You can help BUILD A BIGGER CHURCH TO SERVE A BIGGER VISION: Log on to

Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez

www.HelpBuildaGayChurch.com

Raised to date & in the bank: $140,100

HOMECOMING SUNDAY – SEPT. 21ST

MCCNY's Acclaimed Choir Makes Its Triumphant Return from Summer Vacation

Just how acclaimed is MCCNY's choir? Before beginning summer vacation, the choir conducted by **MCCNY Music Director John Fischer** performed uptown before hundreds of people at the **Harlem Gospel Festival**. They did three numbers – and received a thunderous standing ovation after each one! And at another June event they were honored in a performance at the HSBC **Unity Celebration**. Is it any wonder John Fischer and the choir are often described with superlatives like "the best…the greatest"?

• Now you can experience for yourself this famed 40-voice choir as they make their glorious return from summertime with a special Homecoming celebration in song, accompanied by **David Raleigh's Band**.

• And find out for yourself why the dynamic sermons of **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** – combining awesome scholarship and research with piercing insight and cutting-edge relevancy to our lives today – have won **MCCNY's Pastor** plaudits far and wide, in print and by word of mouth, as one of the most exceptional preachers of the true Gospel of Jesus and one of the leading voices for Queer Liberation in the world today.

• After the Worship Service, enjoy a hot buffet in the church's social hall, thanks to the staff and volunteers of MCCNY's **Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry**, directed by **Rev. Tawnee Walling**.

It's all happening on

Homecoming Sunday – Sept. 21st,
at 10 a.m. and at 7 p.m.
MCCNY, 446 W. 36th St., NYC
(btwn. 9th & 10th Aves.)

PRIDE 2003

Coming hot on the heels of a historic victory in the U.S Supreme Court and same-sex marriages in Canada, the 34th anniversary of the June 1969 Stonewall Uprising was truly **A PRIDE DAY TO REMEMBER.** More pictures of Pride inside.

PRIDE ON PARADE: Rev. Pat Bumgardner marches beside MCCNY's float, which featured live music from David Raleigh's Band and members of the church choir under the direction of John Fischer. (Photo by Eulises Roman Jr. You can view this and many other Eulises Roman Jr. pictures of MCCNY on Pride Day at ***http://mccnypride2003.ermediaus.com****).*

The Pastor's Homecoming Letter by Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Dear friends:

This year as we prepare to celebrate Homecoming Sunday, I find myself thinking about all the things we have accomplished in the past year – things like the successful launching of a shelter ministry for homeless youth, Sylvia's Place, and all the children and youth who now live at the Church – and all that lies before us, like our Capital Campaign entitled Now and Forever: Your Spiritual Center. – Whether we are talking about providing a safe night's accomodation for a child or raising money to buy or build a new Church, we are basically talking about what it means to be a spiritual home for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Queer community in New York City.

A home is many things to many people – it's safe space, a place where we can find nourishment and relaxation; it's a place where we can renew our bodies, minds and spirits; a place where we feel loved and wanted. Often, our homes are the places where we put our best foot forward so to speak, and decorate in ways that reflect who we really are and what we value. People know our "taste" in terms of style and what has meaning for us.

For a long time at MCCNY, we put our mission before all else. We made do with what we had, so that the bulk of our time, energy and talent could go into the Gospel imperatives of feeding the hungry, clothing the naked and sheltering the homeless. None of us have any regrets about that faithfulness, I am sure. Our focus has been our blessing. – And now, I believe, it is time to not only maintain our ministerial imperatives, but also spend a little time, energy and talent on this place that is home to so many of us in so many ways. I believe doing that will help feed and sustain us for the long haul in terms of our ministries, and also enable us to attract more support for our Capital Campaign.

*And so, I'm asking each and every member and friend of MCCNY to join our **LIFELINE** campaign, by pledging a dollar a day between Homecoming Sunday and Christmas. Find a jar or a box and each day, put aside just one dollar to refurbish this miracle on 36th Street! If each member of MCCNY honors this commitment, we will each be able to give $95 above and beyond our regular Sunday offering on Christmas day, and raise $38,490 to re-do the entrance way, stairwell and sanctuary of MCCNY's current home.*

Maybe a dollar a day is very little to ask, and you will want to give for someone who is unable to participate, and maybe you are unemployed but would like someone to "sholarship" you, so that you, too, can be part of sprucing up this place so many find a home at. Maybe you will want to dedicate your dollar a day to the memory of a friend or loved one. Whatever way of participating has meaning for you, I'm praying that everyone will find a way to be part of this campaign to refurbish the place that has fed and sustained us in so many ways for so very long – our spiritual home.

May God bless us all.

With love,

Rev. Pat

Lesbian Magazine Hails MCCNY'S Pastor

When ***GO***, New York's premiere lesbian magazine, profiled "Women We Love" in its June Pride issue, the very first lesbian shero saluted was **"Reverend Pat Bumgarder."** The article by **Nicole Carow** mentions Rev. Pat's upbringing on the farms of northeastern Indiana and describes attempts by some to suggest to her at a young age that her "calling to serve God" meant she should become a Roman Catholic nun. "By accident or by divine comedy," ***GO*** relates, she became with the help of influential friends the only woman to attend and graduate from the prestigious **Catholic Theological Union** seminary in Chicago. Denied ordination in the Church of Rome because she is a woman, she moved to New York ("the city opened my eyes"), came out as a lesbian, joined the **Metropolitan Community Churches** denomination and was **ordained in 1986**. ***GO*** quotes Rev. Pat as summarizing, "I always knew I had been called to priesthood but it [the Roman Catholic Church] had been the wrong venue."

The article enumerates some of her actions as Pastor at MCCNY: "Bumgardner has helped establish the Food Pantry Ministry, which serves over 4,000 men, women and children [each month]. She also founded the MCC Youth Shelter, which is open every night of the week."

GO concludes its profile: "Reverend Bumgardner is now 50 years of age and credits her youthful appearance to 'clean living.' She met her partner of 17 years, Mary Jane, at church."

Calpernia Addams, The 'Soldier's Girl,' Speaks at MCCNY

Calpernia Addams speaking to a packed sanctuary at MCCNY (Photo by William J. Vila).

In its Pride issue on June 27th, the ***NY Blade*** reported: *"The Metropolitan Community Church of New York had a packed house at both the 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. services on June 22 when **Calpernia Addams**, writer, entertainer, and transgender girlfriend of murdered U.S. Army private first class Barry Winchell spoke about her experiences. Addams' story of falling in love with the 101st Airborne soldier was depicted in a Showtime made for TV movie, 'Soldier's Girl.'"* Hats off to the *Blade* for excellent reporting.

MCCNY's Assistant Pastor **Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini** made the arrangements for Calpernia Addams to be guest preacher at the church's annual celebration of Stonewall Sunday – the Sunday before Pride –

when the whole MCCNY community joins with its **GenderPeople** ministry in recalling and honoring the transgender activists who were such a vital part of the Stonewall Uprising in June 1969 and the ongoing LGBT liberation movement that Stonewall brought alive. Speakers in past years have included a number of Stonewall veterans, including the late **Sylvia Rivera**, who was a member of MCCNY, was baptized at this church and ran the Food Pantry ministry here (that now bears her name) until her death in February 2002. (Saint Sylvia's ashes are in the urn that is placed in front of the sanctuary during Worship Services).

Calpernia Addams is a superb public speaker – though she began by apologizing for her "Southern accent" and acknowledging "Y'all's Pastor is a tough act to follow!" – and a scholar of the Bible and the English language. She was by turns quite humorous (her keen appreciation of the King James Version, among other things, brought peals of laughter) and profoundly moving, never more so than when she recalled the murder of Pfc. Winchell. Her dear Barry was brutally beaten to death with a baseball bat as he slept in his barracks at Ft. Campbell, KY by a queer-bashing soldier just because he loved her. Many in the congregation wept uncontrollably as she said that she trusted that because Barry was asleep when the savage attack began, he didn't suffer.

But ultimately, Calpernia's story was one of finding the great courage, self-assurance and faith to be who she really is – and then using her amazing talents to bring that message of liberation and empowerment to the world. Her extraordinary courage and the leadership she now shows as a transgender activist deeply impressed the congregation.

As the ***Advocate*** national newsmagazine (7/22/03) noted in a full-page article after Calpernia spoke at MCCNY, she has now published her autobiography, ***Mark 947***. Those who heard Calpernia in MCCNY's pulpit will recall why – though it might seem an odd choice – Mark 9:47 is her favorite Biblical verse. (It has something to do with her very zany sense of humor, but the Newsletter certainly isn't going to give away the secret… You shoulda been here when she spoke!)

Sylvia's Place Shelter Gets $70,000 Grant

Thanks to the tireless efforts of **Rev. Tawnee Walling**, Development Director of Metropolitan Community Charities of New York, and the volunteers who assisted her, MCCNY's **Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths** has received a $70,000 grant from New York State. Combined with generous gifts already received from members and friends of the congregation, that should be enough to assure that the shelter can continue to pay for its basic operations, including adult staffing, for another year. However, additional grants and contributions will help upgrade living conditions for the approximately six youths whom the facility houses each night (wouldn't air conditioning be nice when it gets hot again next summer?) and the shelter will always need miscellaneous and sundry items from donors, especially socks, underwear, deodorant, body lotion, videos and games. To contribute, contact the shelter's director, Ordinand **Michael Hydes**, on his cell phone (201 486-7895).

At its every-other-year General Conference this summer, the MCC denomination awarded MCCNY a congratulatory plaque for its sponsorship of the **Sylvia's Place Shelter**. It is hoped that this shelter will be an example for other MCC churches in serving LGBTQ youth – just as MCC's Sunshine Cathedral in Ft. Lauderdale FL, under the leadership of their Pastor, Rev. Grant Ford, recently made national headlines for opening the first federally-funded day care center for LGBT senior citizens. Metropolitan Community Churches across the country continue to find new ways to serve the needs of the LGBT community – and make sure that government grants for "faith-based" organizations don't all end up in the hands of right-wing hatemongers and bigots.

3 Candidates Receive Final Approval For Ordination

MCCNY is privileged to a **Teaching Church** – one of only about 14 in the worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. That means that candidates for the ordained ministry in MCC, during or after their formal schooling in seminary for a Master of Divinity degree, also serve on staff at this church. Here they learn the skills required for real-world pastoring under the tutelage of Rev. Pat. They practice those skills, including preaching from the pulpit, with this congregation. As they perform many tasks of service and of leadership, they become beloved members of the MCCNY family. They must also attend denominational seminars and workshops for future clergy. When this arduous process of several years is completed, the candidates must be approved for ordination by the Pastor and the Board of MCCNY and then – the big test – by the MCC denomination's Board of Ordained Ministries.

This summer three candidates from MCCNY received that final approval at MCC's General Conference; thus, they are no longer known as "Candidates" – now they are "Ordinands." The congregation warmly congratulated **Ordinands JEN MILLER HOFFMAN, MICHAEL HYDES and FRANC PERRY.**

PRIDE 2003: A DAY TO REMEMBER

THE VIEW FROM THE REVIEWING STAND: The official Heritage of Pride (HOP) photographer at the reviewing stand snapped these 2 pictures and posted them on the Internet. (left photo) MCCNY's "God Made Us Queer" banner leads dozens of MCCNY marchers waving flags and signs. (right photo) MCCNY's float – designed by Board Member ***Steven Rodick*** *and the church's volunteer advertising director* ***Howard Herrera*** *– booming out the live Gospel music of the MCCNY choir directed by* ***John Fischer*** *and* ***David Raleigh's Band.*** *(Photos courtesy of* ***Photogra.com*** *You can view or order copies of these or several other reviewing stand pictures of the MCCNY contingent at* ***http://HOP2003.photogra.com****)*

THEY JUST CAN'T GET ENOUGH: The throngs lining the Pride parade route all the way down Fifth Avenue and through the Village clamored for MCCNY's various varieties of "God Made Me…" stickers (choices included: Queer, Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Trans, Queer & Asian, Queer & Black; and "Get Married at MCCNY"). Volunteers like these on both sides of the street struggled to keep up with the demand.

PRAYER, THE ALPHA AND THE OMEGA: Before and after the Pride Parade, worshippers filled MCCNY's sanctuary for Sunday Worship Services. Rev. Pat Bumgardner's Pride Day sermon is always a highlight of the year. Not only does the Pastor debunk notions that the Bible speaks ill of what we now call LGBT people; she proves conclusively that LGBT people are right there in the Bible, a crucial part of God's plan for the salvation of the world from the start. "Before people try to bash us with the Bible, they ought to try reading it," she said as she quoted Scriptures about the same-sex love of David and Jonathan, the undying same-sex love of Ruth and Naomi (expressed so eloquently it is often quoted by unwitting heterosexuals at their marriage ceremonies), the transgender warrior Deborah, the "eunuchs," etc., etc.

THE QUEER CHURCH ON THE QUEEN OF AVENUES: MCCNY's contingent marches down Fifth Avenue. A TV commentator covering another parade once called Fifth Avenue "the Queen of the Avenues." Never was the title more apt than on this Pride Day 2003, the 34th anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising. The LGBT community was especially regal and festive, celebrating recent victories and gathering strength for the continuing struggle to end queer-bashing violence, discrimination and all injustice. The upbeat Gospel music blasting from MCCNY's float made clear: WE KNOW FOR SURE THAT ULTIMATE VICTORY IS OURS!
*(Pride Day photos by **Beth Kling** and by **Eulises Roman Jr.**)*

*Some of the fund-raising volunteers at the MCCNY beverage booth. (Photos courtesy of **GreatPartyPics.com**. You can view these and many other pictures of Pride Day in NYC at **www.GreatPartyPics.com**)*

31 VOLUNTEERS RAISE $3,400 FOR CHURCH AT PIER DANCE

Deacon Brenton Buchanan assembled 31 volunteers from the church to staff an MCCNY beverage booth at the Heritage of Pride (HOP) dance on Pier 54. While others from the church were still marching, the volunteers assembled before 4 p.m. and kept the booth staffed until the closing LGBT Pride Day fireworks display over the Hudson at 10:30 p.m. Besides the $1,500 that HOP donated to the church for staffing the booth, the eager volunteers received $1,900 in tips which they also donated – for a whopping record grand total of $3,400. The booth sported plenty of MCCNY's "God Made Me…" stickers (and so did some of the dancers at the dance).

This is the **Honor Roll** of 31 volunteers who raised $3,400 for the church: Deacon Brenton Buchanan, Timothy Walls, Frank DiMarco, Deacon Jorge Blondett, Scott Kemp, Bob Hollinger, Matt Boland, Cheryl Bassett, Cheryl Tucker, Colleen Sovory, Sarah Bess Lewis, Basil Rodericks, Anthony Phillips, Philip Pares, Daniel Miranda, James Elmore, Lloyd Lee, Michael Pavese, David Altermatt, Greg Vabre, Philippe VonBurg, Deacon Bali White, Chaka DeLeon, Arnold Mungioli, Damon Bishop, Emory Edwards, Julio Quintero, Mark Gilrain, Rev. Fred Lerro, Joseph Coello, Dr. Alex Weymann.

Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline Is Pastor of MCC Richmond

After preaching a fine farewell sermon here on the 4th of July weekend, **Rev. Dr. Robin Hawley Gorsline** (MCCNY's Director of Religious Education for the past two years) and his spouse, **Dr. Jonathan Lebolt**, were commissioned by the Pastor and congregation during Worship Services the following Sunday to go forth (two by two, as specified in Mark 6:7) to their next calling. Rev. Robin is now Pastor of **MCC Richmond**, VA. Earlier this summer, Rev. Robin was the keynote speaker at the annual conference of Rete Evangelica Fede Omosessulita [Protestant Network on Faith and Homosexuality] in **Italy**, where his presentation was entitled, "Theologizing Queerly: Some Sexual/Spiritual Contexts." The Newsletter looks forward to providing updates on Rev. Robin and Jonathan's progress in Richmond, as we do from time to time on all the clergy who once trained or served at MCCNY and have now moved on to other callings; reader feedback indicates that these occasional *"WHERE ARE THEY NOW"* features are a popular item. Speaking of which:

- **Rev. Pressley Sutherland**, Pastor of MCC North London, and his congregation were recently featured in the U.K. gay men's magazine *Attitude*. His spouse **David Bedella** is a major star on the London stage. *The New York Times* Broadway critic Ben Brantley, reporting from London on July 17th about "the four-alarm fire of a show at the National Theater," says "the show's second act takes place in hell, presided over by David Bedella's song-and-dance Satan."
- **Rev. Kerri Messner** has relocated to London and is on staff at **MCC North London**.
- **Rev. Patrick Cheng** is advancing towards his Ph.D. in systematic theology at Union Theological Seminary while tutoring one of the seminary's introductory courses in systematic theology taught by Prof. James Cone. Rev. Patrick's review of Bob Goss's book, ***Queering Christ***, will be published in the *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*.
- **Rev. Julio Flores**, Assistant Pastor of **MCC New Haven**, has instituted a Spanish language Service for that church's growing Latino/a membership and as an outreach to Hartford's large Spanish-speaking population.
- **Rev. John Magisano** has been named to the Board of "Interfaith Impact," an interfaith coalition on social justice issues, and to the LGBT Advisory Council of the NY State Office of Alcoholism & Substance Abuse Services.
- **Rev. Dr. Pablo Navarro** resigned as Pastor of **ICM Cristo Sanador in San Juan**, PR, [ICM is "MCC" in Spanish: Iglesia de la Comunidad Metropolitana] to pursue new work including teaching and possibly planting new ICM churches. Earlier, Rev. Pablo gave thanks that the denomination's prayers for an end to the bombing on Vieques were answered. "We now thank you and pray for the day that as a world we can all live in peace," Rev. Pablo said.
- In other news from ICM Cristo Sanador, the San Juan church recently sent a warm letter to MCCNY, thanking MCCNY for the $100 a month this congregation has long sent to them. They now feel strong enough, in their 8th year, to ask that the money be sent instead to a brand new church of our predominantly LGBT denomination in **Brazil**. MCC **Rev. Elder Armando Sanchez** presided at the first **ICM National Convention** in Brazil [ICM is "MCC" in Portugese: Igreja de Comunidade Metropolitana] where 300 people showed up to launch ICM in the country that has more nominal Roman Catholics than any other. MCCNY's bedrock commitment to diversity can only benefit from close ties to our sibling congregations in Puerto Rico and, now, Brazil.

New York Well-Represented At MCC'S General Conference

A thousand people representing the more than 300 congregations in our worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination gathered in Dallas, TX in July for the denomination's every-other-year General Conference. MCCNY's voting Clergy Delegates were Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini and Rev. Tawnee Walling. MCCNY's voting Lay Delegates were Board Members Susie Chin, Gayle Davis and Rita Saylor, former Board Member Norma Sharp, and Deacon Buddy Seaton (an auxiliary NYPD officer who also worked on the General Conference security detail). Other members of this church at General Conference included the Pastor's spouse Mary Jane Gibney, Deacon Carolyn Parker (chair of MCCNY's Christians of African Descent ministry) and Rosemarie Napoli, outstanding choir member and much-loved all-around volunteer.

Summertime Songsters

Rick Libert and Andy Buck, a popular duo at folk music clubs in the city, leading the congregation in song. While the morning choir took its summer break, the congregation was not left "orphaned," music-wise. Music Director **John Fischer** remained at his post as congregational song leader, and other congregants with musical careers beyond the church walls pitched in with stirring contributions, including **Ayana Lowe**, whose jazz band frequently performs at clubs around town, and the chart-conquering duo known as Shimmerplanet, John Fischer and **Carolyn Eufrasio**.

"...LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE OTHERS, SO THEY MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS..." — Matthew 5:16

(Photo at Left) ***Rich Torres and Sophia Pazos*** *of MCCNY's Arcoris [Rainbow] Latino/a ministry heading up the LGBT contingent at the Puerto Rican Day Parade. Sophia proudly waves a rainbow LGBT Pride flag.*

(Photo at Right) MCCNY choir member ***Claude Ashby*** *(in the middle of the picture) receives an Award for Generosity from the American Veterans for Equal Rights New York at their annual Pride Month awards ceremony. AVERNY president Denny Meyer (at right in picture) makes the presentation.*

(Photos by ***Doug Meszler*** *for* ***Gay City News****. Reprinted courtesy of Gay City News.)*

With more than 400 official members and still more adherents, all of them dedicated to carrying out the Biblical imperative cited above, it's only natural that MCCNY's congregants are often at the forefront when social justice and LGBT rights are at issue. But, often as not, in such situations their connection to the church may not be evident to the casual onlooker nor remarked upon by the media. **Deacon Danny Gonzalez**, for instance, was shown up close and plain as day with his spouse in an **ABC News** report on the campaign for same-sex marriage equality this summer. But there was no mention of Metropolitan Community Church. Likewise, it caught *The Query's* queer eye when two successive issues of *Gay City News* (June 13-19 and June 20-26) during Pride Month showcased pictures of people we recognized from church.

One of those pictured, **Rich Torres**, coordinator of **MCCNY's Arcoris Latino/a de Cristo** (ALC) ministry, told the Newsletter that half of the much-publicized LGBT contingent at the Puerto Rican parade were members and friends of MCCNY's ALC. He lamented that onlookers didn't know that and that media coverage didn't point it out. Rich opined that LGBT people of faith play a far more prominent part in the **LGBT activist movement** than they are credited for.

A quick random scan through the Newsletter's archives seems to bear out Rich's contention that MCCNY's **social justice ministry** has often contributed a significant percentage of the participants at important public events. A few examples:

- On March 22, 1995, Rev. Pat and scores of MCCNY congregants were among the nearly 200 who picketed an appearance in Manhattan by NY State Attorney General **Dennis Vacco** (R) whose discriminatory acts included denying domestic partnership benefits to LGBT employees in his office (alerted to his intolerant policies by such protests, the voters gave him the boot).
- On April 15th, 1999, Rev. Pat, Rev. Pressley and a sizeable group of congregants who took off from work carried the MCCNY banner in a march by thousands across the Brooklyn Bridge, organized by Rev. Al Sharpton, "to protest racism and brutality in the New York Police Department, especially the murder of **Amadou Diallo**," the Newsletter reported at the time. The MCCNY delegation constituted at least half of those behind the "lesbian and gay" banner in the march.
- On July 23, 2000, according to The New York Times, "…Rev. Pat Bumgardner, the pastor of Metropolitan Community Church, …led the memorial service" attended by 300 for transgender hate-crime murder victim **Amanda Milan**. "Members of her church's transgender spiritual group, Gender People, organized the memorial with members of about twenty other gay, lesbian and transgender groups. The ceremony was followed by a march to the site of Ms. Milan's death…," said The Times.
- On April 5, 2001, Rev. Pat, then-Candidate (now Rev.) Kerri Messner, Sylvia Rivera and many other congregants participated in a rush-hour rally in **Times Square** to protest the eviction of a drop-in center there for homeless youths, many of them LGBT and many of them people of color. Major media including WABC-TV Ch. 7 covered Rev. Pat's speech. (Her remarks there led to the Sylvia's Place Shelter at MCCNY.)
- On August 15, 2001, MCCNY again provided at least one-third of the scores who demonstrated outside the **Egyptian Consulate** on the East Side against the arrest of the "Cairo 52" gay men at a riverboat nightclub and in support of freedom for LGBT people in the Middle East.
- MCCNY's clergy and congregants, led by Sylvia Rivera and the GenderPeople ministry, played an important part in the hearings and demonstrations at City Hall leading to passage of the **Transgender Rights Law** on April 24, 2002.
- Rev. Pat, Rev. Kristen, Rev. Tawnee and numerous congregants carrying the church's banner were a visible presence at large demonstrations for **Peace** and against war in Iraq.

The greeting letter available at the MCCNY Welcome Center in the social hall makes no secret of the social justice ministry: *"Whether you desire nothing more than to hear the Word of God and receive Communion beside your LGBT siblings each Sunday, whether you want to sing in the choir in front of the congregation or operate a video camera for cable TV at the rear during Worship, whether you want to feed the hungry, visit the sick and help the homeless, whether you seek a small quiet group for queer-friendly Bible study and prayer or* ***a large noisy group with whom to stand up publicly against violence and injustice*** *[emphasis added], you've come to the right place at MCCNY. Welcome home."*

AN MCCNY RETREAT *at the idyllic Incarnation Center in Ivoryton, CT.: Rev. Kristen conducted two retreats there in recent months, each attended by the maximum capacity of 40 congregants. (Photo by Deacon Buddy Seaton).*

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LATE-BREAKING NEWS: The congregation applauded Luisa Soriano, Lucky Michaels and Tanino Minneci for keeping the Food Pantry and Shelter operating and serving their clients under trying conditions during the Blackout of 2003. The Aug. 24th Holy Union of MCCNY mermbers Mel Bryant, 38, & Bradley Curry, 39, was big news in *The New York Times*, which said: "The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, a minister of the Metropolitan Community Churches, a Protestant denomination, will perform the commitment ceremony."

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS:

9/11 Commemorative Service: **Thursday, Sept. 11, at 7 p.m., marking the second anniversary. Rev. Pat Bumgardner presiding.**

Mid-week Worship: **7 p.m. every Wednesday in the sanctuary. Ordinand Franc Perry presiding.**

GenderPeople: **Meetings at 12:30 p.m. every Sunday, hosted by Moshay Moses.**

Arcoiris [Rainbow] Latino/a de Cristo: **Circulo de Oracion [Circle of Prayer] the first Sunday of each month at 12 noon in the sanctuary.**

Christians of African Descent: **Meetings monthly . Contact Deacon Carolyn Parker.**

Asian Pacific Islanders: **Meetings the fourth Sunday of each month at 12 noon. Contact Board member Susie Chin.**

HOMECOMING SUNDAY

September 21ST
at 10 a.m. and at 7 p.m.

THE QUERY NEWSLETTER

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

DECEMBER, 2003

HOLY COMMUNION AT MCCNY

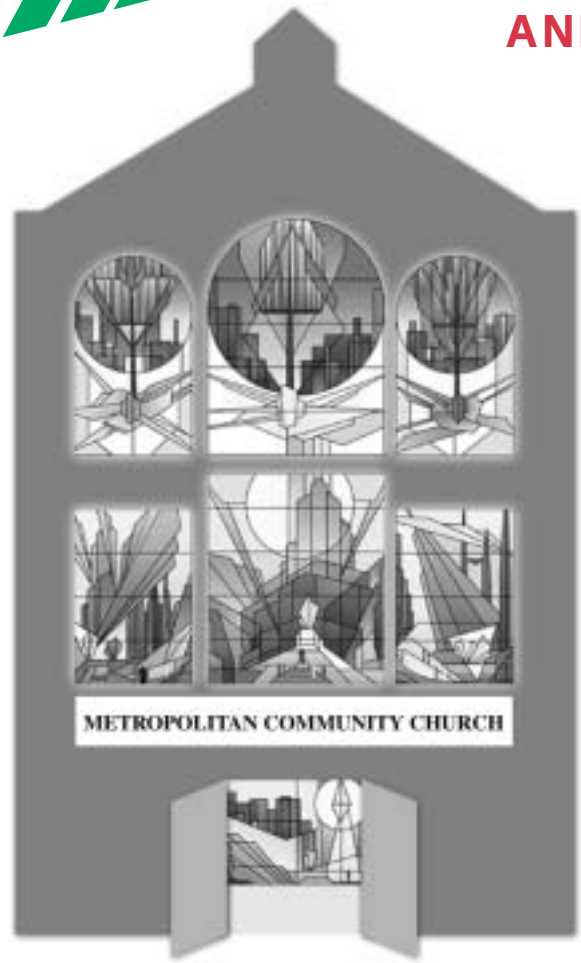
Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez

MCC celebrates Holy Communion at every Worship Service and, like Our Savior (see Matthew 26:27), offers this Blessed Sacrament to "ALL OF YOU."

MCCNY IS BEAUTIFYING ITS CHURCH BUILDING

SOON!

STAINED GLASS WINDOWS AND OTHER IMPROVEMENTS DUE WITHIN MONTHS – *IF YOU CONTRIBUTE NOW*



The architect's drawing of MCCNY's new look with magnificent stained glass windows and other improvements. Only $80,000 stands between us and making this sketch a reality – real soon. Won't you give generously this Holiday Season to make it happen?

Within months, MCCNY hopes to complete a major, dramatic beautification project that will see big magnificent stained glass windows installed in the church's building facing West 36th Street as well as other significant improvements.

The bargain-basement price tag the church has been able to get for this ambitious project is $80,000, thanks to several generous people including designer Jackson Hall of Ft. Lauderdale FL, who helped design and is a member of the landmark MCC Sunshine Cathedral there.

To make this vision a reality now, every member and friend of MCCNY (or supporter of its social services ministries for the LGBT community) is urgently being asked to contribute an extra $95 now in a Christmas or holidays offering, earmarked for the "Lifeline" project.

The net effect of the planned improvements and renovations will be – to use the vernacular – making our humble building "look more like a church." For many congregants, seeing these very visible and tangible upgrades occurring this spring will be the fulfillment of years of prayers and longing, the most exciting development since MCCNY acquired and moved into this old church building 10 years ago. (cont. on page 2)

The Pastor's Greeting

Rev. Pat Bumgardner **Christmas 2003**

The people who walked without light
have seen a great light.... Isaiah 9

Dear friends:

This year as we prepare to celebrate the holidays, Isaiah's prophecy rings true for us on many levels – from the spiritual to the political to the everyday business of maintaining our home here in New York City. As many of you know and have been part of, we engaged an ambitious Lifeline Campaign to, among other things, shed some natural light in our sanctuary for the very first time in ten years. The renderings for the windows that will greet us as we enter the vestibule and replace the boarded up and broken glass of our facade, as well as the panels that will line the stairwell and rest across the front of the sanctuary were unveiled on Thanksgiving Sunday {see Front page} with designer Jackson Hall in attendance. Created to capture the urban setting of our ministry and the theme that has literally been the lifeblood of MCCNY – a house of prayer for all people – these windows represent our hope that many, many more of our brothers and sisters in the Queer community who have yet to catch a glimpse of the light will be drawn in and find their way home.

To every one who gave generously over and above their regular Sunday offerings to make this renovation possible, and to those who continue to give to the Lifeline Campaign I want to express my sincere and heartfelt gratitude. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Bradley Curry and Mel Bryant for their vision and ingenuity, as well as their continued generosity; to Mark Gilrain for organizing Friends of the Lifeline; and to Bob France for breathing new life into MCCNY's Capital Campaign, Now and Forever Your Spiritual Center. For all of us this has been and remains a labor of love.

"You're nobody 'til somebody loves you," or so the lyrics go. – Over and over visitors to MCCNY tell me what a warm, inviting congregation we are. I guess we've found our 'somebodiness' because of the love that has found us. --- And now it's our hope that by pouring some of our love back into this space, more and more of our people will see the light and make MCCNY their spiritual home.

MCCNY – and churches just like us in 22 countries around the globe – helps people find and give voice to the deepest, truest, most passionate and powerful parts of who we are as God's people. And that discovery is what is fueling the fires of freedom from Bangkok to Boston, from New Delhi to New York City. Queer people are seeing the light, not only in terms of a willingness to put ourselves out there in the quest for human rights, but in terms of our willingness to reclaim some of the joys and celebrations that are part of human life. From consecrations to wedding announcements in newspapers great and small to rejoicing over Supreme Court victories, we have become a people of celebration – and that's because we've seen the light.

Isaiah will go on to write in that ninth chapter –
The yoke that was weighing on us,
the bar across our shoulders,
the rod of our oppressors,
God has broken....

Never has that been more true for us as a people. There's a certain serenity that has found its way into our hearts this year – maybe because of all the victories won, maybe because of all the long held hopes that now seem so near to fulfillment – or maybe just because we really have seen the light and get –

it's to us, that Child of Promise is born
to us, new life is given.

May this Christmas 2003 truly be a time of peace and goodwill, a time of light and life for all our people.

With love,

BEAUTIFICATION SOON (cont. from page1) But there is also a significantly larger vision at work. According to members of the church's Capital Campaign committee (who've been hard at work for more than 3 years), the successful completion of this "Lifeline" project is a necessary prelude to moving forward on the church's ultimate goal: acquiring the neighboring property (a parking lot behind the church) and building on it in order to more than double the space available for our (sometimes-overcrowded) Worship Services and our vital (but desperately in need of expansion) social services ministries, the **Sylvia Rivera Memorial Food Pantry** and the **Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths**.

Anyone who has seen these ministries in action knows that to meet the needs they are called upon to serve, they simply must have lots more room. And, the Capital Campaign committee and the experts they've consulted say, the big-time donors and philanthropists who could bankroll that long-term, multi-million-dollar expansion want to see us complete this short-term "Lifeline" project first.

Have you ever wondered what you could do to make New York's church of LGBT people a much more beautiful and inspiring structure? Have you asked what you could do with a relatively small donation to really kick-start the long-term expansion of the crucial social services ministries for the LGBT community run by this church? Now, you can do both with a Christmas or holidays contribution of $95 (more if possible, of course) to Metropolitan Community Church of NY, 446 W. 36th St., NY NY 10018. And please spread the word: ask your friends and acquaintances to do likewise. Pass along this Newsletter. *We need $95 from everyone.*

❑ **YES**, I want to help install beautiful stained glass windows and make other important improvements in MCCNY's church building *right now* – and in so doing also prepare the way for the Capital Campaign to double the size of the church and its social services ministries in the years ahead.

Enclosed is my contribution of:

❑ $95 ❑ other: $ _____

Please mail contributions to:

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street • New York, NY 10018
(For more information, phone 212 629-7440)

Designer from Florida's Famed Sunshine Cathedral Plans Major Facelift for MCCNY'S Church Building

Sunshine Cathedral MCC in Ft. Lauderdale, FL (at right) is one of the largest and most beautiful of the 300 churches in the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. Now Jackson Hall (at left) of Ft. Lauderdale, who designed the Sunshine Cathedral's magnificent stained glass windows, has grand plans for dramatically beautifying MCCNY's church building on West 36th Street. The $80,000 project could be completed this spring – if you give generously now.

You Are Invited to an Ordination Ceremony

Franc Perry, truly a Favorite Son of this congregation, will be ordained into the clergy of Metropolitan Community Churches, and you are invited to attend:

4 pm, Sunday, February 29th, 2004
James Chapel
Union Theological Seminary
Broadway at 122nd Street, NYC

*Ordinand Franc Perry is also one of the congregation's favorite inspirational singers. Franc continues to preside and preach at the (informal, approx. 45-minute) midweek Worship and Communion Services every Wednesday at 7 p.m., as he has for the past year. The Oct. 29th midweek Worship and Communion Service (with Ouida Harding as guest musician and about 40 people present) marked the **10th anniversary** of MCCNY's move into this building, its own church home. Franc's spouse, entrepreneur/businessman Bruce Leavitt, is a generous contributor to MCCNY and a Capital Campaign supporter.*

MINISTRIES ON THE GO:

Arcoiris Latino/a de Cristo (ALC) took center stage for the Oct. 12th observance of Dia de la Raza. Flags of the Western Hemisphere nations adorned the sanctuary. ALC's **Maribelle Vazquez** had a key role in Worship Services and led the congregation in saying in Spanish the Prayer That Jesus Taught Us.

The **men's group**, coordinated by Board Member **Steven Rodick**, teamed up with the Times Squares (NYC's LGBT square dancing group) to host a "Halloween Hoe-Down" in the social hall. They even imported bales of hay.

To find out about future events of these and MCCNY's many other ministries, check the church bulletin every Sunday *(and congratulations to the Newsletter's own **Les LaRue** for designing the new, improved bulletin that made its debut in September).*

Moshay Moses Becomes A Deacon of the Church

Ms. Moshay Moses at her recent installation by Rev. Pat and the congregation as a Lay Deacon at MCCNY.

Her name is Moses, and many have testified that she's leading them ever closer to the Promised Land where God's love for all reigns supreme. **Moshay Moses**, coordinator of MCCNY's **GenderPeople** ministry and organizer of last year's fundraising "Gender on Fashion" show at the church, was installed on Sept. 21st as the church's 17th currently-active Lay Deacon. (You can spot Deacons by the distinctive sashes they wear). Deacon Moshay, a woman of transgender experience, is an advocate and outreach worker at Positive Health Project (PHP) specializing in promoting health and awareness among transgender people. Her emphasis is on direct assistance to sex workers. She is an official client advocate/liaison for PHP and Midtown Community Court. She has presented workshops at Harlem United, Fordham University, Columbia University, local high schools and at other organizations. Deacon Moshay was honored last year with a major award from **Manhattan Borough President C. Virginia Fields** and now serves on the Borough President's Advisory Board on LGBT Policy. She is also a member of the Transgender Policy Council of New York City.

Deacon Moshay and GenderPeople are already hard at work on plans for an even bigger and more successful 2nd annual "Gender on Fashion" show in 2004, with all proceeds again benefiting **MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry**.

30 from Social Justice Ministry Cheer Harvey Milk H.S. Students

On the first day of the school year in September, 300 LGBT activists welcomed students arriving at Harvey Milk High School. Among them were 30 members and friends of MCCNY's social justice ministry, led by **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and her spouse, **Mary Jane Gibney**. Their cheers buoyed the arriving students, and their message of God's love for queer people reached millions via heavy mass media reporting on the event (as seen in these two typical examples of the coverage). MCCNY's **Arcoiris Latino/a de Cristo** ministry, chaired by Richie Torres, was part of the **Latinos Contra La Homofobia** [Latinos Against Homophobia] coalition that issued a public letter in support of Harvey Milk High School.

AS SEEN IN N.Y. TIMES... Rev. Pat applauds arriving students

Reprinted from The New York Times, 9/9/03

AS SEEN ON WABC-TV NEWS.... MCCNY's "God Made Us Queer" banner stands front-and-center near the schoolhouse door. (at right)

Cathy Marino-Thomas (at left), a lesbian mom in the congregation, and another MCCNYer greet the students with encouraging signs.

Photos of TV screen by Dion Brown. From WABC-TV News, 6 p.m., 9/8/03.

Rebuffed by Bigotry at City Hall, Their Lesbian Love Triumphs in Wedding at MCCNY

A famous *Gay City News* picture showed Deacons Montel Cherry and Michelle Slack comforting one another after they were denied a marriage license by the City Clerk on Valentine's Day.

In October, *The New York Times* reported their church wedding at MCCNY. It was the second time in recent months that the nation's largest-circulation Sunday paper reported on a same-sex union ceremony conducted by Rev. Pat Bumgardner.

(At left) Photo by Doug Meszler for Gay City News. Reprinted from Gay City News, 2/21-27/03.

(At right) Reprinted from The New York Times, 10/5/03.

Ex-MCCNYers Make Their Mark Around the Denomination

Former MCCNY Board Member ***Bob Wolff*** is a co-founding member of a new MCC church in Vermont. ***Rev. Elder Diane Fisher*** presided at the inaugural Worship Service. Before the event, Bob told the Newsletter that some "Vermont mainline churches welcome queer folk" while others "expect queer people to transform themselves to be heterosexuals." He added, "However, even the most welcoming church here is a long way from being an MCC congregation."

Rev. Pressley Southerland, Pastor of MCC North London (and former Assistant Pastor of MCCNY), was a celebrant, and Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry a guest of honor, at a special Worship Service marking the 30th anniversary of the MCC denomination's arrival in the U.K. ***Rev. Kerri Messner***, another ex-MCCNYer, sang during the Service.

Rev. Pressley Sutherland and Rev. Elder Troy Perry at the 30th Anniversary Service.

Rev. Michael Hydes Ordained

Rev. Michael Hydes at the altar celebrating Communion after he was ordained into the clergy of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination at MCCNY on Nov. 9th, Leather Sunday. After graduating from seminary in his native U.K., Rev. Michael came to this MCC Teaching Church a year ago with the recommendation of Rev. Pressley Sutherland, Pastor of MCC North London (who traveled here for the ordination, at left in photo). Now Rev. Michael intends to stay at MCCNY as ***Director of the Sylvia's Place Shelter for Homeless LGBTQ Youths****. He is also editor of the* ***video ministry*** *and Pastoral Staff liaison to the* ***men's group*** *ministry coordinated by Board Member Steven Rodick. Rev. Michael's spouse is the imposing Chris Baker, chair of the Metro Bears organization.*

Photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez

Congratulations, Rev. Kristen

The congregation offered a heartfelt round of applause and prayers of thanksgiving in September as Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini celebrated her second anniversary as Assistant Pastor of MCCNY. To call Rev. Kristen "popular and hard-working" is both an understatement and a cliché, but it's so true the Newsletter has to say it. It's a little-known fact that, among her countless duties, Rev. Kristen is also the Pastoral Staff liaison to the Newsletter, in which capacity she is so helpful in digging up facts for us that we often feel she should be listed as a co-editor in the staff box. Her spouse, Rev. Tawnee Walling, is Director of Development for Metropolitan Community Charities of New York and former Director of MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry.

TV Coverage Multiplies Size of Congregation

It happens so often these days, one might almost think **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** would be getting used to it by now. But she's still startled when strangers recognize her in public and treat her like something of a religious celebrity because of her weekly televised sermons. Most recently, Rev. Pat was attending a seminar for New York City church people who want to combat racism. During a break in the sessions, she didn't know what to expect when a woman insistently called out "Excuse me! Excuse me!" and began tapping her on the shoulder.

"I love your TV show," the woman explained. "You've expanded my concept of church, and that's helped me tremendously in my ministry with young people in Brooklyn." Such unsolicited compliments are occuring more and more frequently as the number of people watching the MCCNY show continues to swell. (And it's not just Rev. Pat. "Nice new choir robes you got," a surprised congregant was once told by a stranger on the street. "I saw you on TV.")

The TV coverage of MCCNY's Worship Services is available to all of the hundreds of thousands of cable TV households throughout **Manhattan, every Sunday at 8:30 a.m., on Time-Warner channel 57 and RCN channel 110**. The hour-long broadcasts normally show highlights of the previous week's Service including the Scripture readings, choir and special musician performances, and of course the sermon by the Pastor (or guest preacher); occasionally, as on any TV program, repeats of recent popular shows are aired.

Viewer feedback makes clear that those who worship via the TV coverage do so seriously and consider themselves part of the congregation – they often send prayer

requests to the Pastor, for instance, or phone in for counseling – and that their considerable numbers multiply by at least several times the combined total of **300-plus who attend the 10 am and 7 pm Services in the flesh.**

There is also evidence – in the testimony of at least two current Lay Deacons among others – that seeing the church on television is a most potent form of outreach, motivating and encouraging people to visit in person and ultimately become formal members of MCCNY.

Chief cameraperson **Cheryl Tucker** unobtrusively videotapes the Sunday Worship Service from a perch in the rear of the sanctuary, and **Rev. Michael Hydes** – whose expert video and computer technical skills extend far beyond what he learned in seminary – edits the tape on the church's state-of-the-art equipment to fit the hour-long time slot and delivers it to the cable broadcast center for showing the next Sunday.

The story of how MCCNY's video ministry began eight and a half years ago illustrates a point Rev. Pat makes in her sermons: **God works for good in all situations.** An MCCNY congregant was grief-stricken at the sudden unexpected death of his longtime companion. He knew that he could never again enjoy using the big old camcorder that had recorded so many vacations and other happy moments for his companion and himself. So he donated it to the church and, as part of his prayerful healing, he undertook the process of meetings and paperwork needed to get the church the 8:30 am Sunday time on Manhattan Neighborhood Network (MNN). The initial telecast, on the first Sunday of July 1995, showed the previous week's Pride Sunday Service.

It was perhaps, by the sophisticated standards of today's MCCNY broadcasts, a quaint home video, but – in the words of **Deacon Buddy Seaton** at the time – **"it put the church on the map."** Several "generations" of dedicated volunteers (**German Lopez** among them) and major equipment upgrades have steadily improved the show's audio-visual quality and vastly increased its viewership in the eight years since.

But the video ministry is not ready to rest on its laurels. More volunteers are still needed for important specific tasks. Will you send out faxes to make sure every publication that prints **TV listings of interest to the LGBT community** mentions MCCNY's program? Will you – **outer borough and suburban residents** – go to bat to extend the program's reach beyond Manhattan Island and get it on a public access channel in your area?

Cheryl Tucker in the cameraperson's perch at the rear of the sanctuary. Her dedication and video skills help make MCCNY's Worship Services available to hundreds of thousands of households every Sunday morning.

In Church and in Jazz Clubs, Ayana's Vocals Stir the Soul

By Michael Dain

MCCNY harbors many skilled and talented people in its community. One of those gifted congregants, **Ayana Lowe**, has shone her light during Worship Services, gracing us with glorious solo pieces. While her gifts as a gospel and spiritual singer are breathtaking, her talents as a blues and jazz singer are truly marvelous. To see the full rainbow of her talent, catch her performances at music venues around the city.

I first saw her perform over a year and a half ago uptown on upper Lexington Ave., and I've been a devoted fan ever since. Her repertoire consists of some of my favorite music – blues, jazz and standards from what is known as the "American Songbook."

Ayana Lowe is living her dream. She had always sung in church and gospel choirs as a child and growing up. Upon reaching adulthood, she became a teacher. She teaches intellectually gifted children such subjects as Cultural Arts and Movement & Music at the Hunter College Campus School. At MCCNY she found the motivation and encouragement to pursue her avocation of singing. Ayana is originally from Morrisania in the Bronx. She moved with her family to New Jersey at an early age.

Venues where Ayana performs include the restaurants Orbit on 116th at First Ave. and the Garage on Seventh Ave. South below Christopher St. (get there early so you can finish eating before the show starts), and nightclubs where she can be seen include "55" on Christopher St. and the Nuyorican Poets Cafe on East 3rd St.

Her uplifting repertoire encompasses a broad range of blues and jazz and popular selections from "Wild Women Don't Get the Blues" to "You Ain't Nothin But A Hound Dog" to "You'd Be So Nice to Come Home to." Her musical influences include Bessie Smith, Billie Holiday, Dinah Washington, Duke Ellington, and many others. She performs some of their well known songs, but takes the most delight in singing some of their lesser known compositions. It's entertaining and educational! She is a teacher after all.

Her musical education, besides her experiences in choirs and gospel groups, has been jazz workshops, jam sessions and on the job experience with Charlie Persip – Dizzy Gillespie's drummer – and big band leader Howard Williams. She currently heads the 5-member **Ayana Lowe Jazz Combo** and also sings with the Howard Williams Jazz Orchestra.

Frequently her performances are packed, so it's best to arrive early. It's been a real pleasure to watch her grow in confidence and really involve herself and her audience in the emotion of the music.

She has a CD currently out "Knock Me A Kiss" and is releasing a new one this month. She will be **performing on Dec. 27th** at the Nuyorican Poets' Cafe on East 3rd St., and on **Dec. 29th** at the Garage on Seventh Ave. South. Don't miss her!

Volunteer: It's 'Amazing' What Revs. Do All Week

By Beth Kling

*Editor's note: Many times we've heard newcomers observe at the social hour after Sunday Worship Services, "This church is really bustling with activity today!" Sometimes, in their innocence, they'll then ask, "What's it like the rest of the week?" A congregant who began volunteering daily in the church office a few months ago found out for herself: it's "amazing" how hard our three full-time clergy work and how many diverse tasks they are called upon to accomplish all week long. Newsletter contributing correspondent **Beth Kling** interviewed volunteer **Ali Stafford** to get the scoop and filed this report.*

Ali Stafford has been volunteering at MCCNY for a number of months and recently became the Interim Director of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry. I interviewed Ali about her volunteer experience. —Beth Kling

BK: What did you learn about the church through your volunteer experience?

AS: I was amazed by how much work gets done by Revs. Pat, Kristen, and Tawnee every day – and by how many different hats they wear. They do everything from the smallest things to the largest. They write and deliver sermons, counsel parishioners, handle financial matters – among many other things – and they also clean, serve meals, make photocopies, bag groceries. The church relies on volunteers, and if they don't show, then the staff does the work. But it always gets done. Before volunteering, I never thought about who did all the work; I thought it just magically happened.

I'm also extremely impressed with how well they interact with parishioners and the people who show up for counseling. No matter what difficulties the staff members are having, they manage to transcend those problems in their interactions with the people who come here for help.

I've also seen amazing, rewarding miracles happen here. I've seen moments when God provides just in the nick of time. I've seen so-called coincidences that would make you believe in God if you didn't already.

BK: What kinds of things could volunteers do at the church?

AS: So many things. The church is a business in many ways. A lot of the skills I learned in the corporate world are transferable here – like computer skills, organizational ability, capacity to set and meet goals and be a team player. Volunteers are needed in so many areas.

• Clerical/Office: Answering phones, typing Weekly Bulletin, typing letters, photocopying, helping with mailings, keeping the library in order.

• Carpentry/Painting: Volunteers could paint the shelter walls and floor and build bookshelves and cubbies for the clients' personal items. Also, people could donate and set up lamps – anything to make the space more home-y.

• Cleaning/Organizing: People could clean the church, sort through closets, reorganize Christmas decorations, etc. Parishioners could decorate the sanctuary as the seasons change.

• Food Preparation: Volunteers could help with coffee hour on Sundays, including setup and cleanup. People could also donate baked goods. For the shelter, parishioners could prepare dinners for the clients or pay for pizza delivery occasionally.

• Food Pantry/Shelter: Volunteers could pack groceries and bag lunches daily, distribute food at the window, and help when grocery deliveries come. People could wash sheets and towels for the shelter. We also need someone to create a "street sheet" with information on local resources for shelter and pantry clients.

BK: What was the best thing about volunteering?

AS: The staff members love everything you do, and you feel very appreciated. They do so much important work here. Every day, they help hungry, homeless, and jobless people. It's rewarding to play even a small role in helping them help others.

Also, Rev. Pat likes to dress up like Wonder Woman occasionally. As a volunteer, you get to see that. (Just kidding!)

Volunteer Ali Stafford was amazed to find out how busy Rev. Pat, Rev. Kristen and Rev. Tawnee are all week long.

Volunteer Staff
Of the Query Newsletter

Editor: Joe Kennedy
Layout & Graphic Design Editor: Les LaRue
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Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor. You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

'Tis The Season... To Come Home to Church & Gods Love

METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY

CELEBRATE A LESBIAN AND GAY CHRISTMAS

ROMAN CATHOLIC

The New York Times once printed this delightful religious services listing. Now they say it was a mistake and they'll never do it again. But you can still celebrate a Lesbian & Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Christmas at MCCNY this year!

Christmas Eve, 7 pm

Candlelight Service
Rev. Pat Bumgardner, preaching
Special musicians
Followed by Gala Christmas Eve hot buffet and party in the social hall

Christmas Day, 11 am

Service of Lessons and Carols
Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, Homilist
Special musicians
Followed by Community Christmas dinner in the social hall

Advent: "O Come, O Come Emanuel"

– Beat the last-minute Holiday rush: Come to church now in this special pre-Christmas season. Sundays, 10am & 7pm.

Kwanzaa

Sun., Dec. 28
10 am & 7 pm

Guest Preacher: Rev. Wanda Floyd, Pastor of Imani MCC in Durham, NC and organizer of MCC denomination-wide CAD conferences.

Some of the members and friends of MCCNY's Christians of African Descent (CAD) ministry who met recently to prepare the Kwanzaa celebration. Deacon Carolyn Parker, CAD's chair, is at center with hand raised in prayer.

Established by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966, Kwanzaa is a celebration of the African heritage of African-Americans. At MCCNY it's a memorable first-rate holiday for the whole congregation. The Christians of African Descent (CAD) ministry dramatically recalls the traditional African harvest festival, emphasizes the role of community and family of choice in LGBT African-American culture, and focuses on the meaning of the 7 Kwanzaa principles – unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith – from the perspective of LGBT people of color and of faith.

Epiphany/ 3 Sabios

Rev. Pat readies the 3 Magi icons for their big day and smiles at evidence she's unearthed in Scripture and tradition suggesting they're queer like us. Don't miss her revealing sermon on Jan. 4th.

3 reasons to be joyful: Epiphany, a.k.a. "Little Christmas," is one of the most important feasts on the Christian calendar. 3 Sabios [3 Wise Ones] is an even bigger holiday of gift-giving in some Western Hemisphere cultures than Christmas itself. And this most extra-special day marks the **32nd anniversary** of the founding of Metropolitan Community Church of New York by the late Rev. Howard Wells on Epiphany Sunday, 1972. It's MCCNY's birthday! The sermon by Rev. Pat Bumgardner, the choir's performance directed by **John Fischer**, and the special treat in the social hall afterwards will all reflect the triple celebration.

Visit Your Church for the Holidays:

CHRISTMAS, KWANZAA, EPIPHANY/3 SABIOS

Fashion on Gender

Fundraising Fashion Show May 18TH Will Benefit Sylvia Rivera Memorial Food Pantry

MCCNY's **GenderPeople** ministry, facilitated by **Deaconess Moshay Moses**, will hold its 2nd annual "Fashion on Gender" charity fundraising fashion show at the church at 7 p.m. on Tuesday, May 18th. Suggested donation is $10. All proceeds will go directly to MCCNY's **Sylvia Rivera Memorial Food Pantry** (named in honor of St. Sylvia Rivera, the Stonewall veteran and transgender activist who ran it until her death on February 19, 2002). Please save the date and spread the word about this notable event. The hundred-plus people who attended "Fashion on Gender" last year really raved about the show, which brought in $900 for the Food Pantry. GenderPeople promises it will be even more fabulous this year. Deaconess Moshay and **Food Pantry Director Ali Stafford** are coordinating preparations for the show.

FREEDOM MARCH IN QUEENS

*MCCNY's contingent marching in the 5th annual **queer-inclusive St. Patrick's Parade** in Queens – which this year highlighted the marriage equality issue as courageous **New Paltz Mayor Jason West**, who says "I DO" to solemnizing same-sex marriages, came face to face with NYC's Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who doesn't. Over the years hundreds of LGBT social justice advocates including Rev. Pat Bumgardner have been jailed for daring to try to march in Manhattan's bigot-run St. Patrick's Parade. (photo by **Tony Breton**)*

✣ EASTER at MCCNY ✣

Join your Family of Faith in celebrating Holy Week and Easter

Wednesday, April 7th	7:00 pm	Footwashing Ceremony with Rev. Kristen and Rev. Franc
Holy Thursday, April 8th	7:00 pm	Queer Liberation Seder with Rev. Kristen, Rev. Michael and Rev. Franc
Good Friday, April 9th	7:00 pm	Stations of the Cross + Lavender Light Gospel Choir + Rev. Troy Perry, preaching
Holy Saturday, April 10th	4:00 pm	Annual Easter Awards Banquet UTS/Refectory (120th & Broadway) $50
	7:00 pm	Easter Vigil: Lighting of the New Fire + Eric James, Cantor + Rev. Troy Perry, preaching
Easter Sunday, April 11th	10:00 am and 7:00 pm	Celebration of the Resurrection + Rev. Troy Perry, preaching Gala Reception following each celebration

Please Give $95 NOW for
STAINED GLASS
Windows Installation
See page 3

QUEST FOR MARRIAGE EQUALITY INTENSIFIES

MCCNY's Pastor **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and the church's **social justice ministry** – who were lining up at the **New York City Clerk's office** to demand same-sex marriage licenses more than a year ago, long before it was front-page news – continue to take an outspoken and visible public role as the drive to end discrimination in marriage picks up momentum. All are invited to join in the effort.

Rev. Pat spoke at a news conference on the steps of **New York City Hall** on Feb. 29th. She was joined there by many public officials including City Council Speaker Gifford Miller and State Senator Tom Duane, other LGBT community leaders including Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, and 400 rank-and-file activists including singers from the New York City Gay Men's Chorus. Rev. Pat also traveled to the State Capitol in **Albany** to testify in favor of same-sex marriage.

THE QUERY NEWSLETTER

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

APRIL, 2004

IN THE BEGINNING – JUNE 4, 1971:

Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) members bearing a wedding cake topped by representations of a lesbian couple and a gay male couple occupy the New York City Clerk's office after City Clerk Herman Katz ordered the predominantly-gay Church of the Beloved Disciple, pastored by Rev. Robert Clement, to stop performing Holy Unions, which Clerk Katz branded as "illegal gay marriages." (photo of the GAA demonstrators taken from 1971 video footage by Randy Wicker, a gay activist for 40 years, who was a eulogist at St. Sylvia Rivera's funeral at MCCNY on Feb. 26, 2002

ONE YEAR AGO – FEB. 14, 2003:

Same-sex couple Maribelle Vazquez & Sophia Pazos receiving their marriage license application at the New York City Clerk's office, moments after Rev. Pat Bumgardner & Mary Jane Gibney had received theirs. But City Clerk Victor Robles then said issuing the marriage license applications to the 2 same-sex couples had been a "mistake." About a dozen same-sex couples and their supporters from MCCNY were at the City Clerk's office as part of coordinated actions by Metropolitan Community Churches across the nation that Valentine's Day 2003 at the behest of denominational Founder and Moderator Rev. Troy Perry. (photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)

THE PRESENT –

FEB 16, 2004:

Former MCCNY Board member Rich Walker (at right), now a San Francisco resident, and his spouse Brad Chilcoat are married at San Francisco's City Hall. Their wedding picture graced the front page of USA Today. When he lived here, Rich was a popular figure in NYC's gay leather community and his byline appeared on articles in this Newsletter.

MARCH 4, 2004:

Channel 7 news shows Rev. Pat Bumgardner lined up with scores of same-sex couples demanding marriage licenses from the New York City Clerk's office (photo left), while Channel 4 news (photo center) and the NY Blade (photo right) show members of the church's social justice ministry among the 1,000 picketing outside. (photos of news coverage taken from TV screen)

The Pastor's Greeting

Rev. Pat Bumgardner **Easter 2004**

France • Sweden • Belize • Denmark • New Zealand • Mexico • Norway Bermuda • Brazil • Luxembourg • Finland • Japan • Austria • Taiwan • Ireland Niue • Singapore • Belgium • United Kingdom • Canada • Australia • Croatia Poland • Netherlands • Italy • India • Trinidad-Tobago • Germany • Seychelles Czech Republic • Spain • Israel • Switzerland • United States • US commercial and educational and government and military and non-profit organizations

Easter 2004

Dear friends:
I sat spellbound as Rev. Michael read the list of countries and organizations that worship with MCCNY via our web-site and the newly established availability of our Sunday celebrations there. My heartfelt thanks to Chris Baker and Rev. Michael for honoring the Gospel call to go out to the highways and byways and bring the Children of God in.

> *God has a mighty vision for MCCNY, and many, many people are bringing that vision to life – some through financial support, some through hands-on labor; all of us, I trust, through prayer.*

As I contemplate the activities of this past week – the "first gay weddings in New York", as one commentator put it – and look ahead to Easter and celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus the Christ, I am struck by the connection between these seemingly disparate experiences.

> *First, though, let me honor and thank Mel Bryant and Bradley Curry, and Michelle and Montel Cherry-Slack for their courage and witness at City Hall on Thursday, March 18th. That is a day that will go down in history, as we mark the start of a state-wide and national movement to call clergy to the streets in support of equal marriage rights.*

> *"Each generation must, out of its relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it or betray it." – Franz Fanon*

I believe, we as a people are discovering our mission and fulfilling it on many levels. I have said before and I will say again – God made Queer people to bring the world to right relationship. From the steps of City Hall to the unchartered highways of the internet, to reaching Queer people otherwise isolated from all support, to our daring to celebrate the Promise of God to raise up new life where once there was only death --- to dare to celebrate that in a world where war, famine, disease and discrimination are the norm – we, you and I and Queer people around this globe are making the connection between who we are and what happens in our world. We are literally bringing the Reign of God to earth. And for that good news I give thanks.

I hope you will join MCCNY in celebrating throughout Holy Week and Easter. "This is the day God has made" – the day we were made for – "let us be glad and rejoice in it!"

With love,

The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Pastor

LATE-BREAKING FLASH: As the Newsletter was going to press, Rev. Pat Bumgardner solemnized same-sex marriages on the steps of New York City Hall on March 18th in a momentous act that garnered enormous coverage. Details and follow-up in the next Newsletter.

(photos and captions taken from NYNewsday.com)

Michelle (L) and Montel Cherry-Slack hug while the gay Rev. Pat Bumgardner looks on after a gay marriage ceremony on the steps of City Hall.
(Chris Hondros/Getty Images)

Rings are exchanged in a gay marriage ceremony between Bradley Curry (L) and Mel Bryant (R) on the steps of City Hall.
(Chris Hondros/Getty Images)

"I BELIEVE" Stewardship Annual Pledge Drive Concludes on Easter

Whatever "You Believe" is the reason for supporting MCCNY, one thing is for sure, MCCNY needs you. We need to increase our daily operating budget for 2004 to provide increased funding for programs, services to the congregation and local community, salaries, utilities, and building maintenance. "We Believe" that you can make this happen. So…"Make the Connection" and experience the joy and sense of ownership that scheduled giving to MCCNY will bring to your life.

MCC NY Your Spiritual Center

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____ **Zip:** _____

Phone: _____ **E-mail:** _____

My pledge will be approximately $ _____ ❑ **Weekly** ❑ **Bi-weekly** ❑ **Monthly**

Or please deduct $ _____ **from my credit card monthly:**

❑ **Amex** ❑ **Visa** ❑ **Mastercard**

Account # _____ **Exp:** _____

Grand Ordination Service For Rev. W. Franc Perry

New York's **Union Theological Seminary** has seen a lot in its 168-year history, but rarely anything as grand as Rev. Franc Perry's Ordination Ceremony there on Feb. 29th. About 400 people attired in their finest clothes filled the seminary's large sanctuary, its balcony and an additional overflow room to witness Rev. Franc's ordination into the clergy of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT **Metropolitan Community Churches denomination**. Rev. Franc's parents, numerous other relatives and members of his boyhood church were among the participants. It's a tribute to Rev. Franc, a successful lawyer and activist in his previous career, that the congregation was a Who's Who of secular and religious dignitaries. The Newsletter spotted the second-highest citywide elected official, **NYC Comptroller William J. Thompson**, seated next to Rev. Franc's spouse, businessman/entrepreneur Bruce **Leavitt**. MCCNY Music Director **John Fischer** conducted the full choir. **David Raleigh** and his Little/Big Band played, and **Carolyn Eufrasio** and **Melanie Harris** sang solos. After celebrating Communion, the newly-ordained Rev. Franc – well-known in his own right for his marvelous singing of sacred and Gospel music – led the congregation in the closing hymn.

The MCC denomination already has one world-renowned Rev. Perry – **Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry**, the denomination's Founder and Moderator – and now MCCNY is proud to have its own distinguished Rev. Perry – **Rev. W. Franc Perry** – serving this congregation as Staff Clergy. Rev. Franc presides at Midweek Worship Services, every Wednesday at 7 p.m. in sanctuary.

Rev. Franc Perry is presented with a Bible and a hymnal that belonged to his ancestors during his Ordination Service.
(photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)

Deacon Brenton Buchanan Elected a Lay Delegate

Deacon Brenton Buchanan was elected to one of MCCNY's 4 Lay Delegate positions at the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 11th. He will join the incumbent Lay Delegates – **Deacon Norma Sharp** and Board members **Gayle Davis** and **Rita Saylor** – in representing this congregation at Regional Conferences and General Conferences of our worldwide predominatly-LGBT denomination, along with **Michael D'Elia**, chair of MCCNY's Stewardship Committee, who was elected Alternate Lay Delegate. They will have the responsibility of voting for the denomination's next Moderator at the 2005 General Conference in Canada, where denominational Founder **Rev. Troy Perry** will retire as Moderator after 37 phenomenally successful years at the helm.

Musicians in the News

David Bedella, a former soloist and choir member at MCCNY, won the **Olivier** (London's equivalent of a Broadway **Tony** Award) for **"Best Actor in a Musical"** on Feb. 22nd for his role in the smash-hit Jerry Springer-The Opera. His spouse is **Rev. Pressley Sutherland**, Pastor of MCC North London, former Assistant Pastor of MCCNY, and like David, a veteran of the Broadway stage. David was one of the social justice activists who **successfully sued** the Giuliani administration for denying them vital medications while they were incarcerated overnight for peacefully protesting Matthew Shepard's murder in 1998…. Current MCCNYers with recently released CDs include: **Philip Pare** whose "Gethsemene" is described as a metaphysical, acoustic journey that "wowed" author Edmund White. (Philippares.com)…. **Shimmerplanet** (MCCNY Music Director **John Fischer** and **Carolyn Eufrasio**) whose "Welcome to Shimmerplanet" (www.shimmerplanet.com) is rising on the popular music charts…. **Ayana Lowe** (profiled in the Dec. 2003 Query Newsletter) whose latest release is "Ghost of Women." (ayanalowe@yahoo.com). …and **Mohammed Shatara** (friend of MCCNY's Capital Campaign co-chair **Mark Gilrain**), whose CD is "Sayjin Rand." (www.staarfinger.com)…. **Eric James**, choir member and soloist, made news on the sports pages as one of the top finishers in the annual **Matthew Shepard Memorial Tennis Tournament**, which raises money for LGBT charities….. **Marcos Gladstone**, Pastoral Leader of ICM/MCC in **Brazil**, visited MCCNY in person on Feb. 29th to thank this congregation for its financial support and introduce his church's new CD of original Brazilian-worldbeat spiritual music. It's become an outreach and fundraising hit for the LGBT church in Brazil. (www.icmbrasil.com.br)

Ayana Lowe

New Monthly Praise & Worship Service Off to Good Start

By Rev. Michael Hydes

Editor's note: Rev. Michael Hydes has begun a monthly Praise & Worship Service (at 1 pm one Sunday a month), which he describes as a highly "participatory" experience. Each month's Service has a different theme. Rev. Michael files this report describing December's inaugural service, when the theme was Christmas:

Our monthly **Praise, Worship and Healing Service** is very much an expression of who we are and the lives we live. In December the wonder of Christmas was brought to us by the wonderful Drag Queen **'Trai La Trash'** in the music of Judy Garland. Bears sang to 'Santa Baby' (Big Thanks to **Mr. Metrobear Jay Duckworth** who recently won the title of **Mr. Grizzly USA**), and our own very talented musicians and singers brought Christmas music and stories into our worship and claimed them anew as Holy. A Big Thank You to a whole host of talent too numerous to mention. If you haven't yet enjoyed the gifts of our community and life celebrated in this way, then come and join us!
See www.mccny.org for more details.

Deacon Buddy Seaton Wins Lifetime Achievement Award; Valerie King Named Volunteer of the Year

Deacon Buddy Noah Seaton has been a member of Metropolitan Community Churches in New York and San Francisco for over 20 years and is a well-known LGBT activist in other organizations – including **Heritage of Pride (HOP)**, which runs NYC's June Pride events, and **American Veterans for Equal Rights New York (AVERNY)**, which demands an end to the discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy by the nation's largest employer. In recognition, Deacon Buddy recently won the **Lifetime Achievement Award** at MCCNY's 2nd annual "Glinda" awards presentation. Deacon Buddy is a health care professional specializing in helping people living with AIDS. An NYPD Auxiliary Police Officer, Deacon Buddy was promoted to Lieutenant last year. A well-known and popular volunteer in many areas at the church, Deacon Buddy is a member of MCCNY's **GenderPeople** ministry and is a leader of the **Welcome Team** that greets visitors.

The "Glinda" for **Best All-Around Volunteer** was awarded to **Valerie King**, who contributes especially generously of both her time and tangible items to MCCNY's **Sylvia Riveria Food Pantry** and other ministries. Valerie always seems to be there when someone is needed to help out the Pastoral Staff or other volunteers. She is also a photographer whose pictures have appeared in the Newsletter.

The "Glinda" awards event was organized by **Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini**, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life. **Deacons Montel & Michelle Cherry-Slack** assisted in the presentations with exceptional wit and humor, and **John Fischer** and **Carolyn Eufrasio** provided musical entertainment. All told, 155 members and friends of the congregation won "Glindas" for their volunteer work over the past year. (Apologies that space prevents the Newsletter from listing them all here for the recognition they deserve).

***Deacon Buddy Seaton** (at right) carried the rainbow Pride flag as AVERNY marched up Fifth Avenue in NYC's **Veterans Day Parade** last Nov. 11th. The LGBT vets contingent shouted to onlookers, "Ask us – we'll tell!"*

MCCNY and SAGE Team Up to Assist the Elderly; Volunteers Needed

By Tom Weber

Editor's note: Tom Weber is Volunteer Director at Seniors Active in a Gay Environment (SAGE).

SAGE (Senior Action in a Gay Environment) has received a Faith in Action grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to partner with MCCNY and other faith-based LGBTQ and LGBTQ-friendly communities to provide companionship services through volunteers to frail and neighborhood-bound LGBTQ seniors at home. This grant will enable SAGE to augment the work already being done by its Friendly Visitor Program by recruiting volunteers from MCCNY, and by identifying members of MCCNY and people MCCNY members may know of, who could benefit from these services. Senior LGBTQ people are our forebears and have helped pave the way for the rights and services currently enjoyed by all LGBTQ people. Yet many times, individuals may be on their own when they get older and need help. Do you have a couple extra hours every week to visit somebody in their home, maybe do a little shopping for them or run some other simple errand? Many people have found this kind of volunteering to be one of the most rewarding experiences of their lives. You provide the time, the heart and the energy, and SAGE will provide the training and the other tools to help you get started. If interested, please call Tom Weber, Volunteer Director at SAGE, at 212-741-2865.

Volunteer staff of THE QUERY Newsletter:

Editor . . . . . Joe Kennedy
Graphic Design & Layout Editor . . . . . Les LaRue
Assistant Graphics:. . . . . Ali Stafford
Mailing Coordinator: . . . . . Michael Dain

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Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org.

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 110.

MCCNY's Sylvia's Place Shelter for Homeless LGBTQ Youths Saves Lives During an Unusually Cold Cruel Winter

By Rev. Michael Hydes

*Editor's note: As MCCNY marked the first anniversary of the opening of its **Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths** this winter, there was something much more serious than an anniversary to contend with. January was one of the most bitterly cold months on record, and young people without shelter faced the imminent danger of frostbite and even freezing to death. Some of the LGBTQ youths who find emergency shelter at Sylvia's Place (which is named for **St. Sylvia Rivera**, the late Stonewall veteran, LGBT rights activist and MCCNY Food Pantry Director) have been evicted by their families of origin because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. All would face discrimination and harassment at a non-queer-specific shelter. **Rev. Michael Hydes**, Director of the Sylvia's Place Shelter, files this update:*

When Sylvia's Place opened a year ago, we could not have imagined the difficulties or blessings ahead. Over the past year, well over a hundred young LGBTQ youth have used our services. Not only have these youngsters found a safe place to sleep, a hot meal at the end of the day and breakfast with which to face the day ahead, many of these youth have called Sylvia's Place 'Home.'

Of course we didn't expect blizzards. We didn't expect power outages throughout Manhattan lasting, not hours, but days. We didn't expect the coldest temperatures New York has seen in many years. We didn't expect some of the hottest temperatures New York has seen in many years. We didn't expect our antiquated plumbing to cause flooding. We didn't expect our washing machine to break down. We didn't expect funding from grants to take so long to come through.

We also didn't expect to be so fortunate as to find the incredible level of commitment to the torch which **St. Sylvia Rivera** lit as we found in **Rev. Pat**, our counselors **Tanino Minecci** and **Lucky Michaels**, our many volunteers, and the congregation of MCCNY. We didn't expect **Rev. Tawnee Walling** to work so tirelessly in securing funding for us, which is now coming through. We didn't expect **Miss Trai La Trash**, soon to be crowned **Empress of the Imperial Court**, to become a patron whose fundraising has made such a significant difference to us. We didn't expect **Chris Baker** to design and support **www.sylviasplace.org**, a website dedicated to the work of the shelter. We didn't expect the gifts of toiletries, clothing, books, toys, videos and many other things these youth so desperately need. We didn't expect support from the **Metrobears** or the **Oscar Wilde Memorial Bar** (221 E. 58th St.) We didn't expect that some of these youth would find a spiritual home at MCCNY, singing in our Choir or helping in the Food Pantry even after leaving Sylvia's Place.

All in all, the difficulties to date have been great, but the blessings have been greater. If you want to see diversity and love in action, if you want to see the Spirit of God working in the lives of youth today, if you want to see the Body of Christ reaching out a helping hand, then just call into Sylvia's Place Shelter one evening and witness all three.

Building Renovations Go Forward; Stained Glass Windows on the Way

Volunteer project managers Bradley Curry & Mel Bryant flank designer Jackson Hall. Mel & Bradley's wedding by Rev. Pat was noted in The New York Times.

The renovation of the church's 3rd floor office, library and meeting space area is complete. C'mon up. The project to install stained glass windows in the church building on West 36th Street is moving forward on schedule. The special collection at Christmas for the stained glass windows raised its goal of $40,000 – half of the project's total $80,000 cost. *Now, in a campaign called "**Each One Reach One,**" each member and friend of MCCNY is being asked to solicit a one-time donation of $95 from one other person* to raise the final $40,000. Any friend of MCCNY or its social services ministries who has not yet done so is asked to send $95 now to the "Lifeline" campaign for stained glass windows and building renovation.

The first stained glass window, in the church's entranceway, will be installed soon. It will be followed by stained glass installations in the sanctuary and the stairwell. Then, later this year, the magnificent centerpiece of the project – 3 big 2-story high windows on the face of the building – will be put in.

MCCNY members **Bradley Curry & Mel Bryant** deserve credit for initiating, spearheading and carrying out the renovation projects. They did the work on the 3rd floor, and they brought about the participation of designer **Jackson Hall** of Ft. Lauderdale, FL, who is creating the stained glass windows, and of other generous contributors. One way to express appreciation to them for their efforts is to buy the "God Made Me Queer" T-shirts that are on sale at the church for $15.

The new look coming to MCCNY's church building in 2004 – all that's needed now is a one-time donation of $95 from you or someone you know.

THE CONGREGATION: The 250-seat sanctuary is full as early arrivals in a festive spirit await the start of one of MCCNY's 2 Christmas Services.

A Church *ALIVE* at *Christmas*

Christmas Eve CANDLELIGHT SERVICE (at right).

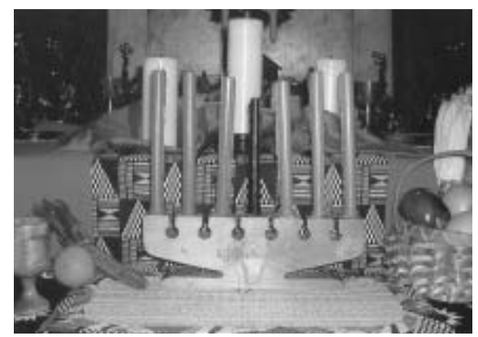
MUSIC DIRECTOR JOHN FISCHER (far left) conducts THE CHOIR (at left).

Christmas photos by Deacon Danny Gonzalez

*THE DECORATORS: Former Board member **Steven Rodick** (at center in photo above), coordinator of **MCCNY's men's group**, and some of the men's group volunteers who decorated the santuary (photo at right) and social hall for Christmas.*

Decorators photo by Board member Frank DiMarco

KWANZAA



The Kwanzaa table at the altar before the Worship Service.

*Board member **Gayle Davis** opened the celebration and sprinkled the libation.*

***Rev. Belva Boone**, Pastor of St. John's MCC in Raleigh, NC, was the guest preacher.*

Kwanzaa photos by Lucky Michaels

Lunar **NEW YEAR**

Rev. Patrick Cheng, Co-Chair of the MCC denomination's worldwide **Queer Asian Fellowship** and former Assistant Pastor of MCCNY, was guest preacher at this church as the Year of the Monkey began. MCCNY's Asian-Pacific Islander (API) ministry, coordinated by former Board member **Susie Chin**, decorated the sanctuary for the congregation's celebration of the Lunar New Year.

Rev. Patrick Cheng and Susie Chin played key roles in a historic **Queer Asian Pacific Legacy Conference** held at New York University from March 5th through 7th and were panelists on the topic "Coming Home: Queer Asian Spirituality." The conference hosted dignitaries and visitors from around the world, including actor B.D.Wong, author Urvashi Vaid and activist Joo-Hyuan Kang.

MCCNY'S CHOIR MAKES COMMAND PERFORMANCE AT IMPERIAL COURT

Members of the choir (with MCCNY Music Director John Fischer in front) at the Imperial Court's Night of a Thousand Gowns on March 27th. *Photo by Chris Baker*

PRIDE MONTH AT MCCNY

June 20th: "STONEWALL SUNDAY" 10 a.m. & 7 p.m. Worship Services

- Special commemoration of the Stonewall Riots 35th anniversary
- Come & See the new stained glass window in the church's entranceway!
- Rev. Belva Boone, Guest Preacher.

June 27th: LGBT PRIDE SUNDAY 10 a.m. & 7 p.m. Worship Services
12 noon PRIDE MARCH BEGINS

- Rev. Pat Bumgardner's annual Pride Day Sermon
- Choir's special Pride Day performance, directed by John Fischer (don't miss it – it's the last performance by the morning choir until Homecoming Sunday in September)

– COME OUT AND MARCH WITH MCCNY'S CONTINGENT IN THE LGBT PRIDE MARCH –

Wear red or yellow if you please, to match the color of our float and give the contingent a "distinctive" look… Enjoy the prize-winning live upbeat Gospel music of DAVID RALEIGH'S BAND and the MCCNY CHOIR directed by John Fischer.

Save the Date:
Gala at the Copa
Mon., Oct. 4th
See page 2

Metropolitan Community
Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

PASTOR SOLEMNIZES SAME-SEX MARRIAGES AT NY CITY HALL AND BRONX COURTHOUSE

After decades of toiling in the wilderness of relative obscurity, Rev. Pat's boldly prophetic message suddenly reaches millions (See Pages 3, 4, 5)

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

JUNE, 2004

FIRST OF THE NEW STAINED GLASS WINDOWS BEING INSTALLED IN CHURCH'S ENTRANCEWAY

Beautification Project Will Culminate at Christmas
With Dedication of Big Windows on Front of Building

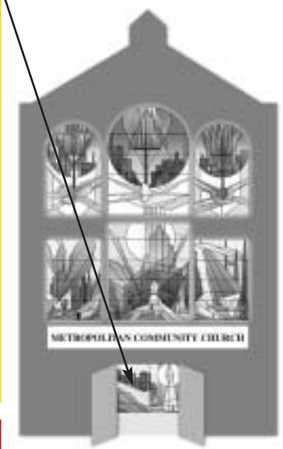
Something to be proud of this June Pride Month: The first of MCCNY's new stained glass windows is being installed in the church's entranceway on Sat., June 19th. (*see sketch at left*)

Designer's sketches of windows by JACKSON HALL

And coming soon, a Christmas celebration to top all: The dedication of the 3 big spectacular windows on the face of the building on W. 36th St. has been scheduled for this December. (*see illustration at right*)

The $80,000 "Lifeline" fundraising drive for the new stained glass windows is nearing its goal. You can get it there now by making a one-time donation of $95. Send checks to MCCNY (attn: Lifeline), 446 W. 36th St., NY NY 10018, or donate online at HelpBuildaGayChurch.com (If you've already given, please ask one other person to make a one-time $95 contribution now to this once-in-a-lifetime beautification and renovation project).

The stained glass windows project is made possible by the generosity of: window designer and creator Jackson Hall of Ft. Lauderdale; volunteer project managers Mel Bradley & Bradley Curry of MCCNY; Ed Finder who is donating the aluminum siding for the large windows on the building's façade; and people like you who are contributing the $80,000 in individual donations of $95 and up.



PASTOR'S PRIDE PROCLAMATION Rev. Pat Bumgardner

STAND UP! STAND OUT! STAND PROUD!

"What I say to you in the night time,
tell in the daylight;
what you hear in whispers,
proclaim from the rooftops." Matthew 10:27

June 2004

Dear friends:

All over the globe, people and parts of life previously silenced and hidden away are bursting forth and being given voice —

from sit-ins in Damascus, until now unheard of
to history professors unearthing records of Armenian genocide
to people telling the story of 3 boys who disappeared one night in Philadelphia, Mississippi while working for the freedom of God's children
to our own people standing up and publicly declaring that all love is good and ought to be equally recognized and protected

human beings are revealing, talking about, acting on truths long consigned to silence. And Jesus' words — "If these were silent, I tell you, the very stones would cry out." {Luke 19} — take on the air of fulfilled prophecy.

We are very proud to celebrate our own Joe Kennedy, member of MCCNY and Scribe to the Board of Directors, who as a longtime member of the Gay Activists Alliance helped pave the way for all the rooftop proclamations and resulting freedom, we so often assume was always the case.

For his willingness to STAND UP, STAND OUT, STAND PROUD Joe has been chosen as a Pride March Grand Marshall. I know we can count on Joe to restore to the march some of it originating fervor and passion for justice.

Many issues/many lives still need to have a hearing — whether we are talking the elimination of 10 years of Don't Ask, Don't Tell or the dismantling of DOMA and the defeat of a Federal Marriage Amendment or the long overdue passage of ENDA or the simple right to have all adult relational configurations equally valued, protected and sanctioned. One of the things I personally remain most proud of at MCCNY is our commitment to give voice and witness to the diverse needs and aspirations of our people, seeing beyond our individual political positions to the broader issue of justice for all. We are not a single issue community, but a Gospel-bearing people who seek to live in a way that restores the world — Queer and non Queer alike — to right relationship.

Joe represents the best of what it means to carry the cross of Christ and the banner of faith, and Heritage of Pride has honored all of us in choosing him this year.

It is my prayer this Pride Month, that we will continue to STAND UP, STAND OUT and STAND PROUD on all the issues confronting us as human beings — from hunger to housing for seniors and homeless youth to stadiums in our backyard to city guidelines enforcing protective legislation for trans people...to simply restoring stained glass windows in a Church on 36th Street that has dared to proclaim the universal, unlimited, unconditional love of God — because all of those things are about honoring who we are and not hiding the truths that can set us all free. And to me, that is what Pride Month is all about.

With love,

Rev. Pat

TRANSITION IN ASSISTANT PASTOR'S POST

Rev. Pat Bumgardner spoke for the congregation when she said, "If I had my way, she would remain with us." But after prayerful discernment Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life for the last 3 years, has decided that she and her life partner, Rev. Tawnee Walling, are called to raise a family. They have decided to pursue the call in Maine. Rev. Kristen will complete her service as Assistant Pastor at MCCNY on Homecoming Sunday in September, but she will continue to run the church's twice-a-year weekend-long retreats in the future.

In a new arrangement, the full-time position of Assistant Pastor for Congregation Life will now be split and filled by MCCNY's two current staff clergypersons, each serving half-time: Rev. Franc Perry and Rev. Michael Hydes will become co-Assistant Pastors for Congregational Life. At the same time Rev. Michael will continue in his current part-time positions at the church as Director of MCCNY's Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths and editor of the video ministry, while Rev. Franc will continue part-time work in his secular career as an attorney and civic activist.

GALA AT THE COPA MON., OCT. 4 AT 7 P.M.

Save the date: MCCNY's Capital Campaign committee, co-chaired by Mark Gilrain and Bob France, announces that the Capital Campaign's gala fundraising banquet will take place at the Copacabana ("The Copa," at 34th Street and 11th Ave.) on Monday, October 4th at 7 p.m. Tickets will be $125. Bob and Mark and the rest of the Capital Campaign committee promise that this event, being the second Capital Campaign gala banquet ever, will live up to expectations that it will be even "bigger and better" in every way than the first banquet was two years ago. That first banquet was attended by 400 people and netted $80,000 for the Capital Campaign (which has been earning interest since then). The aim of the Capital Campaign committee is to increase attendance to at least 500 this time. Will you help out by taking a table of ten? (Big-time sponsors are invited).

WELCOME, UNITY FELLOWSHIP CHURCH: The Manhattan congregation of the predominantly-LGBT Unity Fellowship Church, pastored by Rev. Gail Jones, now worships at 3 p.m. each Sunday in MCCNY's sanctuary.

FASHION ON GENDER RAISES $520: MCCNY's GenderPeople ministry put on the 2nd annual "FASHION ON GENDER" charity fashion show at the church on May 18th and raised $520 for MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry. Clothing designer Cheryl B. debuted her stunning new collection. Sadly, the evening's scheduled M.C., Trai La Trash, was recently injured in a fall from a darkened stage; she attended with arm in a sling and was wished a sincere Speedy Recovery by all. Filling in as M.C., her predecessor as Empress of NYC's Imperial Court, Demi Tasse, presided with humor and aplomb. "Fashion on Gender" was produced by GenderPeople facilitator Deaconess Moshay Moses, assisted by Denise Guzman and Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry Director Ali Stafford. Performers who wowed the audience were Sybil Barrington, Sadaisha Shimmers, Misty, the Brazilian Michelle, and the live musical duo Lashes. These gorgeous models walked the runway and drew cheers from the crowd: *Andrea, Alexa Brash, Billy F., Bobby Abid, Charlene A. Artis, Cleo Jones, Denise Guzman, Dinick Martinez, Dwayne Craig, Erica Extravaganza, Gerald Tucker, Jelisa Salazar, Jocelyn Rawles, Josie Monroe, June Brown, Tori Aaron, Krister/Mali, Laura, Lisa Magee, Lucky, Michael Flowers, Misty Shimmers, Nicole, Noah Buddy Seaton, Paul Kennedy, Racy J., Ramon Picoutt, Rebecca Anneliese Prichard, Simone Simone, Tan Sarntinoranont, and Tangie.*

Demi Tasse

Volunteer staff of THE QUERY Newsletter:

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& Layout Editor . . . . . Les LaRue
Mailing Coordinator: . . . . . Michael Dain

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor. You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018.
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org.

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 109.

Fashion on Gender Wedding Finale

'I WAS HUNGRY, YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT': Leon Jones, who volunteers without fail at the Sylvia Rivera Memorial Food Pantry every week, was recognized for his faithfulness to the Gospel with a surprise presentation by Rev. Pat at the church's annual Easter awards luncheon at Union Theological Seminary. Trai La Trash received an award for her fundraising generosity to benefit the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry and Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths, both operated by MCCNY. As usual, Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Founder and Moderator of the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, was the guest of honor at the event.

Empress Trai La Trash

Leon Jones

AIDS CRISIS – NOT OVER, NOT FORGOTTEN: Sophia Pazoz coordinated MCCNY's contingent in the annual AIDS Walk on May 16th.

Choir member Basil sings a spirited solo on Pentecost Sunday. (Holy Spirited, that is.)

(All photos this page by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)

QUERY NEWS ROUNDUP

NEXT MCC MODERATOR NOMINATED: Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson has been selected by the MCC Moderators Nominating Committee as the candidate for the next Moderator of our world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. The election for Moderator will be held at MCC's 2005 General Conference in Canada, where Rev. Elder Troy Perry, MCC's Founder, will retire as Moderator after 37 very successful years at the denomination's helm. Rev. Nancy is the highly-regarded former Pastor of MCC Los Angeles, the denomination's mother church, and currently pastors Church of the Trinity MCC in Sarasota, Florida. Rev. Nancy is a native of Long Island and a friend of MCCNY. When visiting New York, Rev. Nancy has worshipped at MCCNY, along with her Mom who still lives on Long Island.

LEADER-TO-BE: Rev. Nancy Wilson

SILENT AUCTION RAISES $3,325: The silent auction in the church's social hall on Palm Sunday, conceived of and coordinated by Board member Arnold Mungioni, raised $3,325 for MCCNY. Arnold was elected to a 3-year term on the Board of Directors in January and has quickly earned a reputation as a dynamic fund-raiser – and a fun one. His latest idea: a hot summer fundraiser featuring volunteers at a "charity car wash day." Wanna volunteer? See Arnold. Another fundraising possibility: Board member Gayle Davis, an attorney, is filing papers with New York State to get a Bingo license for MCCNY.

Arnold Mungioni

MCC REGIONAL CONFERENCE IN PUERTO RICO: MCCNY's 5 Lay Delegates – along with the ordained clergy – will represent this congregation at an MCC Regional Conference in Puerto Rico, July 8th to 11th. The 5 Lay Delegates are Deacons Brenton Buchanan, Noah Buddy Seaton and Norma Sharp, Board members Gayle Davis and Rita Saylor, and Alternate Lay Delegate Michael D'Elia, chair of MCCNY's Stewardship Committee.

Deacon Brenton Buchanan

THANK YOU, OSCAR WILDE BAR: The Oscar Wilde (O.W.) Bar at 221 E. 58th St. has donated generously to MCCNY's Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths. Sylvia's Place is a unique and life-saving emergency shelter where half a dozen LGBTQ youths find refuge from the hard, mean streets every night of the year.

TV SHOW IMITATES MCCNY T-SHIRTS: Imitation is indeed the highest flattery, but the original is still the best. The opening sequence of Showtime's hit show "Queer as Folk" this season features a GWM wearing a "God Made Me Gay" T-shirt. You can get an original "God Made Me Queer" T-shirt for $15 at MCCNY – the church famous for coining, advertising and populizing the term. The money raised in T-shirt sales goes to renovating the church building on West 36th Street.

GREAT LAWN SURVIVES SOFTBALL GAME: MCCNY's men's group, coordinated by former Board member Steven Rodick, will keep up its schedule of varied events for all self-identified men through the summer. Outings to beaches and pools and air-conditioned movie nights are among the offings, along with more serious and intellectual fare. On a balmy May 15th, the men's group played a fine game of softball on the Great Lawn in Central Park. (The Newsletter noted that the lawn is extremely strong – it easily survived the beating it took from the men's group's hard-hitting, hard-charging team – so Mayor Bloomberg should stop claiming the lawn will wilt if half a million people stand or sit there for a few hours this summer yelling "Bush must go!").

Batter Steven Rodick and catcher Steve Baker before an inning.

MCCNY'S INTERNET EVANGELISM LEAPS FORWARD: The church's website, www.mccny.org, has been getting a steadily increasing number of hits from around the U.S. and from dozens of other countries. Chris Baker upgraded the website and added streaming coverage of MCCNY's Sunday Worship Services, highlighted by Rev. Pat Bumgardner's sermons and the acclaimed MCCNY choir directed by John Fischer. Computer users worldwide can now see and hear the Worship Service any time they log on. In Manhattan, meanwhile, the popular hour-long telecast of MCCNY's Sunday Worship Services marks its 9th anniversary during Pride Week: Sundays at 8:30 a.m. on Time-Warner channel 57 and RCN channel 109.

"Maybe if love between two men was held as sacred as it is in the Bible, then stripping our enemies and posing them in sexually suggestive postures would no longer constitute the most humiliating and shameful thing you could do to them." – Rev. Pat Bumgardner at the Marriage Equality Forum, Chicago, May 11, 2004.

For almost 10 years, Rev. Pat Bumgardner's weekly televised sermons on Manhattan cable TV have reached thousands of households. But in one 10-minute prime-time interview on NY1 News on March 19th, her boldly prophetic message of God's love for LGBT people and her Gospel-based call for social justice – including marriage equality – reached hundreds of thousands of households.

Recent months have seen a non-stop whirlwind of public activities and media interviews centered on the demand by MCCNY's Pastor and congregation for full and immediate LGBT equality under law in all matters including the right to marry. The attention has been national and international as well as local, and it has carried MCCNY's message to literally millions of people.

What a far cry this is from those many years when the mainstream media ignored this LGBT Church's social justice activism – ignored it just as "a voice in the wilderness" was ignored. As recently as Valentine's Day 2003 – and in spite of the efforts of one of the most highly-regarded gay public relations professionals in the city – the demonstration by a dozen same-sex couples and their supporters from MCCNY for marriage licenses inside the New York City Clerk's office received no news coverage except in NYC's 2 LGBT weekly newspapers (and in *The Query Newsletter* – which had Deacon Danny Gonzalez's picture of a marriage license application being given to Maribelle Vazquez & Sophia Pazoz).

So when NY1 News anchor Davidson Golden asked Rev. Pat, live on highly-rated evening TV, "Should the media have been covering what you've been doing for the past 20 years?" it took no small amount of self-control on Rev. Pat's part – as she confided in her next sermon – to refrain from replying with something like, "DUH!!" In fact, Rev. Pat was dignified and persuasive throughout the interview, and anchor Golden said he looked forward to having her back often "as this story [marriage equality] develops."

Amid the numerous articles and broadcasts about Rev. Pat's advocacy on behalf of social justice was the following report in Chicago's *Windy City Times* by Tracy Baim. Four nationally-recognized leaders in the quest for marriage equality, including New Paltz Mayor Jason West and Rev. Pat, were keynote speakers at the Marriage Equality Forum in Chicago in May. Here is what the report said about Rev. Pat:

WINDY CITY TIMES 2004-05-12
New Paltz Mayor at Marriage Forum by TRACY BAIM

A fourth speaker was Rev. Pat Bumgardner, a fiery Metropolitan Community Church pastor from New York, who has married gay and lesbian couples in that state, risking arrest.

Rev. Bumgardner, a slight woman with a delicate voice but commanding presence, was eloquent and passionate with her words, delivered with the cadence of a well-practiced preacher.

"People say this is not a religious issue," Bumgardner said, but then noted how the arguments against this issue are based in religion. "What is Biblical marriage … . It's important to clear up the misconception that the Bible in particular is against gay marriage," Bumgardner said, noting that marriage was so sacred for the author of the anti-gay marriage bill that "apparently once was not enough for him."

She pointed to several Bible marriages based on slavery or rape, and also to excerpts showing same-sex love between men and between women.

"Maybe if love between two men was held as sacred as it is in the Bible, then stripping our enemies and posing them in sexually suggestive postures would no longer constitute the most humiliating and shameful thing you could do to them," she said, referring to the Iraq prison scandals.

"Who speaks for God … whether we're talking Boston or Baghdad. … The word of God can best be summarized in that simple cry, ''Let my people go,'" she said. "Maybe you're thinking that 'I believe in the separation of church and state.' But the truth is that people do not leave their beliefs, their faith, most particularly, they do not leave their values outside the curtain when they're casting ballots, or outside the doors of City Hall or the state Senate and Congressional chambers. We are here tonight because of what we believe in … . Americans are not in opposition because they think separate is equal … . They are in opposition because somewhere in the recesses of their minds and hearts and spirit, they believe marriage is something holy, sacred, a sacrament. And sacraments are reserved for the worthy, a status that queer people have yet to achieve."

Bumgardner also encouraged more people to come out to families, friends, and political leaders.

Rev. Pat's addressing the Marriage Equality Forum in Chicago (photo by Tracy Bain/Windy City Times).

MCCNY's Arcoris [Rainbow] Latino/a ministry, chaired by Rich Torres and including Maribelle Vazquez & Sophia Pazos, bravely counter-demonstrated in the Bronx against a throng of right-wingers (including Rev. Ruben Diaz) who rallied there against same-sex marriage on March 14th.

NY CITY HALL: MARCH 18, 2004

"Los declaro esposos..."

Una reverendo y un rabino ofician la unión de tres parejas gays frente a la Alcaldía

MAYY SOSA

"Las bodas siempre me hacen llorar", dijo, sirviéndose las lágrimas y muy emocionado, uno de los hombres presentes ayer en las escalinatas de la Alcaldía para presenciar la unión de tres parejas del mismo sexo que se juraron amor eterno.

El servicio religioso, hecho de manera simbólica en predios dominados por el alcalde en un claro desafío al funcionario, quiere hasta la fecha no ha sonado una postura ni a favor ni en contra de este tipo de enlace, atrajo a docenas de personas.

Sin licencia para legalizar su unión ante los ojos de los hombres de fuerza regalan por el escritorio de la ciudad poco antes de la ceremonia pero con anillos, flores y champaña, las tres parejas, dos de mujeres y una de hombres, se dieron el sí en los rituales oficiados por la reverenda gay Pat Bumgardner, de la iglesia Metropolitan Community y por un rabino de Brooklyn.

"Me siento feliz", exclamó Mel Bryant, de 38 años, quien se casó ayer con Bradley Curry (de 41) su pareja desde hace 5 años y medio.

"Estoy en mismo momento al mundo de que nuestro amor

LA ESCUELA NO TENDRÁ PROBLEMA

El Fiscal de Manhattan, Robert Morgenthau, indicó en un comunicado que no hay una regla definitiva de las cortes de Nueva York en el tema constitucional y legal de los matrimonios entre parejas del mismo sexo. "La corte [nivel] no es el ente apropiado para resolver este tema, por esta razón, la Fiscalía no tomará ningún acción con respecto a los participantes en esta ceremonia", aseguró el procurador.

cuenta", señaló Bryant agregando que entre las similitudes legales que espera tenga la convivencia es que "la gente entienda que nuestro amor debe ser tomado en consideración y que tenemos derecho a los mismos beneficios de que gozan las parejas heterosexuales". El evento de ayer fue aprovechado además por un grupo para reunir su apoyo moral a dos religiosos del poblado de New Paltz (al norte de la ciudad de Nueva York) que fueron sentados de cargos por oficiar matrimonios entre parejas del mismo sexo.

"El líder de nuestra ciudad (el alcalde) debe manifestarse públicamente, a favor o en contra de los matrimonios entre personas del mismo sexo, pero no puede mantener silencio sobre este tema o dar dobles mensajes", acotó la concejal Margarita López, quien dio su bendición a los contrayentes como funcionaria electa y los puso al tanto de que sometió una petición en el Concejo para que se le conceda la licencia para efectuar matrimonios.

El alcalde, quien se encontraba dando una conferencia de prensa en Brooklyn en el momento en que la Alcaldía servía de escenario para las bodas de los homosexuales contestó: "Ignoraba habérsenlas perdido. Estaría aquí".

Bloomberg añadió que "si quieren cambiar la ley (estatal que prohíbe este tipo de enlace) sugiero que hagan una manifestación en Albany, ya que sería más efectivo que una en la Alcaldía".

LA REVERENDO PAT BUMGARDNER ocupó oficiar una de las tres bodas efectuadas ayer en las escalinatas de la Alcaldía.

"NEWLY-WEDS": In every language, it was front-page news when MCCNYers had civil marriages solemnized (Hoy [Today], circulation nearly 100,000)… …Even the conservative NY Sun couldn't resist devoting most of the top of Page One to this lovely picture of MCCNY newly-weds.

Hoy

EL PULSO DE NUESTRA GENTE • WWW.HOYNEWS.COM

Religiosos casan frente a la Alcaldía a tres parejas homosexuales en una ceremonia simbólica

Recién casados

The New York Sun

Brain-Twister
Carrey and Winslet Look for Love, p. 19

Go, Manhattan!
Jaspers Shock Florida and Advance in NCAA Tourney

MARCH 19-21, 2004 THE NEW YORK SUN

Same-Sex Marriage Comes to Steps of City Hall

FRIENDS FOR NEW YORK Bradley Curry, left, and Mel Bryant marry at City Hall.

Gay nups at City Hall

Hoxtol (L) and Michelle Cherry-Slack wait for nuptials on steps of City Hall.

WITHOUT A HITCH Bradley Curry (L) marries Mel Bryant in ceremony conducted by the Rev. Pat Bumgardner yesterday.

The Daily News

02 | amNY

Wedding on the sly

Same-sex couples take unofficial vows at City Hall

amNY

The New York Times

Clergywomen Plan to Perform Same-Sex Weddings in Front of City Hall

By The Associated Press

A minister and a rabbi plan to officiate same-sex marriages in front of City Hall in Manhattan today, and are asking other clergy members to attend to show their support.

The event is also a show of solidarity for two Unitarian Universalist ministers who face criminal charges upstate for performing same-sex weddings.

"We're calling on clergy around the state performing these kinds of ceremonies to join us in public," said the Rev. Pat Bumgardner, the lesbian pastor of Manhattan's Metropolitan Community Church, a worldwide Christian fellowship that welcomes gays and lesbians. "We want the same thing as is accorded heterosexual couples — and I've married some of them, too."

Today, Ms. Bumgardner was to marry two couples — one male and the other female — who already pledged their commitment in religious ceremonies. The aim is to bond the couples in a civil marriage, although the legality of doing so is being challenged.

The men, Bradley Curry and Mel Bryant, are in their late 30's; each runs a business managing stylists for photo sessions.

The female couple are Montel Cherry-Slack, 30, a lawyer, and Michelle Cherry-Slack, also 30, an administrative assistant at Ms. Bumgardner's church on West 36th Street who plans to enter Union Theological Seminary in the fall. They had their last names legally changed to be the same and were joined in what they call a "holy union."

"I feel on the one hand excited about the marriage in front of City Hall," said Michelle Cherry-Slack, who met her partner four years ago while both were in law school. "At the same time, it saddens me that we have to do this to get equal treatment. I'll marry Montel over and over again in order to gain legal recognition."

A third couple, two women, were to be married today by Rabbi Ellen Lippmann, founder and rabbi of the Kolot Chayeinu congregation in Brooklyn, meaning Voices of Our Lives in Hebrew.

The men and women "will continue to solemnize civil marriages of same-sex couples, with or without the threat of arrest," said a statement from the New York chapter of Marriage Equality, a group fighting for same-sex civil marriage rights.

Barbara Thompson, a spokeswoman for District Attorney Robert Morgenthau, declined to comment on today's ceremonies.

NYT 3/18/04 B8

BRONX COURTHOUSE: APRIL 29, 2004

Hugh Browne y Germán López en El

Coverage in El Diaro [The Newspaper] of MCCNY newly-weds at the Bronx Courthouse.

Pareja gay se juran 'amor eterno'

JOSÉ MOSSA

EL BRONX — Entre voces a favor y en contra, el veterano de Vietnam, German López, de 56 años, se "casó" ayer con su compañero de 10 años, Hugh Browne, de 41, en las escalinatas de la Corte Suprema de El Bronx, para pedirle a las autoridades que otorgue el derecho de igualdad de matrimonio entre personas del mismo sexo.

"Fue una ceremonia que quisiéramos que hubiera sido adentro (de la corte) y que hubiera sido legal, y es importante que salgamos para decirle a todos que somos ciudadanos de esta ciudad, y merecemos los mismos derechos, no más que eso", dijo López.

La reverenda Pat Bumgardner, de la Metropolitan Community Church, quien celebró el "matrimonio civil", calificó el hecho como una acto de desobediencia civil contra el artículo 3, párrafo 17, de la ley de Nueva York sobre las Relaciones Domésticas, la cual clasifica como delito menor que un clérigo, reconocido por el estado para oficiar matrimonios, realice una unión matrimonial sin una licencia que la permita.

La religiosa indicó que no tiene temor de ser arrestada, debido a que ha celebrado este tipo de matrimonios por 20 años.

Pidió que se acabe con los "arrestos selectivos" y sometimientos a la justicia, contra aquellos que celebran matrimonios gay en el estado de Nueva York, mencionando el caso más reciente ocurrido en New Paltz, donde los reverendos Kay Greenleaf y Dawn Sangrey fueron arrestados.

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

SEPTEMBER 2004

Rev. Jen Miller Hoffman Ordained, Begins Planting New MCC Upstate

Rev. Jen Miller Hoffman & spouse Corine Bertrand with their families at the altar after Rev. Jen Miller's Ordination Service on June 6th. Rev. Jen Miller has begun the task of planting a new Metropolitan Community Church in the vicinity of Binghamton, NY.

Founder of Sylvia Rivera Law Project Speaks

Dean Spade, Esq., Founder and Director of the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, addressed the congregation on June 20th. It was MCCNY's annual Stonewall Sunday celebration, a feast day that recognizes the important contributions made by transgender activists to Queer Liberation from the Stonewall Riots to the present. Dean's incisive message emphasized the need for a progressive and inclusive social justice agenda to meet the needs of all persons from every economic class within the LGBT community.

MCCNY's GenderPeople ministry, facilitated by Deaconess Moshay Moses, meets at high noon every Sunday in the church building on West 36th Street.

HOMECOMING SUNDAY

September 19th, 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.

- The Choir, directed by John Fischer, returns from summer vacation with a dazzling special performance, accompanied by David Raleigh's Band
- More stained glass windows are unveiled – in preparation for the dedication of big spectacular new windows on the front of the church building by year's end
- Rev. Pat Bumgardner delivers a powerful Homecoming Sermon at this crucial time of decision for our country
- Buffet-style hot food is served in the social hall after both the 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Worship Services

Ben Smith, who joined the choir this year, has an amazing vocal range of four octaves. You can hear Ben and the entire acclaimed choir on Homecoming Sunday (and every Sunday thereafter).

Homecoming Sunday
Sept. 19th, 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.
Gala at the Copa
Oct. 4th *(see pg. 7)*

Metropolitan Community
Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

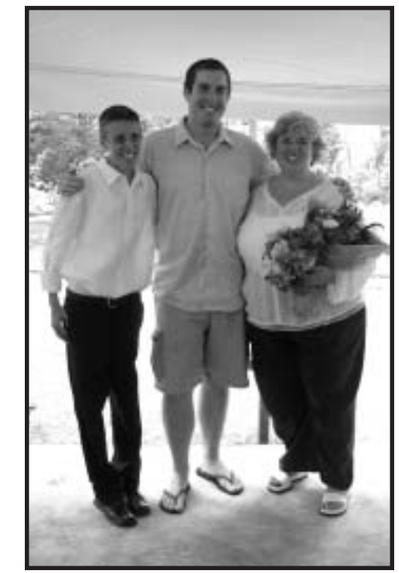
CIVIL MARRIAGE IN NEW PALTZ

No place east of San Francisco is more synonymous with same-sex civil marriage than New Paltz, NY, thanks to its courageous Mayor, Jason West. Fittingly therefore, one of the outspoken leaders in the quest for marriage equality, MCCNY Pastor Rev. Pat Bumgardner, and her spouse of 18 years, Mary Jane Gibney, were married in New Paltz on August 14th.

Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, MCCNY's Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, officiated at the ceremony and committed an act of civil disobedience when she addressed to Rev. Pat & Mary Jane the words it would be legal for her or any other ordained clergyperson to say to any heterosexual couple: *"By the power invested in me by the State of New York, I now pronounce you legally wedded spouses."*

Both Rev. Pat Bumgardner and Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini have spoken those words to many same-sex couples in New Paltz this year as volunteer clergy stepped in when Mayor West was ordered to stop performing same-sex marriages. Two New Paltz area judges with a keen sense of justice have refused to punish the clergy for civil disobedience, ruling that heterosexuals-only marriage laws violate the state constitution's guarantee of equal rights for all.

(Below) After their civil marriage in New Paltz on August 14th, Rev. Pat Bumgardner (left) & Mary Jane Gibney are congratulated by Mayor Jason West, who will be a guest of honor at MCCNY's gala dinner-dance at the Copa on Monday, Oct. 4th (see page 7).



(At right) Some of the many MCCNYers in the Pastor's wedding party. Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini (in center) officiated.

(At left) 3 WEEKS EARLIER, ANOTHER BIG MCCNY WEDDING: On July 24th in New Paltz, Board member Gayle Davis, Esq., & Deacon Carolyn Parker, chair of the church's Christians of African Descent (CAD) ministry, were joined in civil matrimony by Rev. Pat Bumgardner.

Pastor's Homecoming Letter

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

It is right that we should celebrate and rejoice
when the lost are found....Luke 15

Homecoming 2004

Dear friends:

As I write to you, change is in the air....

✣All of us are nearing the end of "summer vacation" much too quickly, I suspect, and gearing up for what the fall season will mean for us in terms of everything from our lives in the Church to our lives at work.

✣The Church itself will have completed Phase II of our Lifeline Campaign to restore stained glass to our sanctuary. On Homecoming Sunday we will be greeted not only by the window that now graces our vestibule, but also by panels up the entranceway and across the front of the sanctuary proper.

✣Our staff will undergo yet another transition as people called by God muster the courage and devotion it takes to follow God's lead. We will be celebrating these transitions on September 19th.

✣Our city and world seem to be in constant flux, sometimes in ways that bless us and sometimes in ways that harm us—

and inside, I think,
we are left with that profoundly spiritual quest
to find our center;
to find the God who "changeth not", as the hymn pens,
and whom we pray will abide with us—
even allow us to come out in a good place,
when all the dust has settled.
"I triumph still if thou abide with me."

I find myself thinking, as we enter the Homecoming Season, about all the change we've been through, and what lies ahead. —As we lived though political conventions these past few months, one our city hosted, there was a lot of talk about what allows us to "triumph still" in the midst of so much fluctuation. There was a lot of talk about September 11th—a "defining moment" we heard people from very different perspectives say. There was a lot of talk about how to keep ourselves "safe and secure from all alarm" in a world that will never be the same for any of us again.

As I pass through some of the 10,000 extra police officers between my home and this Church, that convention has dictated—as I listen day and night to the helicopters overhead, and watch the search lights beaming down on terraces in the building where I live—as we together live, once again, through the disrupting and re-routing of our lives—I find myself thinking a lot about how our lives really have changed since that day now almost three years past, but instantly so very alive, when our daily routines change. And I remembered again, that the one place I've ever really felt secure; the one thing in my life that has ever calmed all my fears—where I find my center through thick and thin—is in this community of faith, with you, in this very place. What makes me feel steady and like there is hope is the promise of love and open-hearted welcome MCCNY continues to hold out to each and every Child of God. I want the world and our part of it here in New York City, to be a better, a more loving and grace-filled place for all God's people. MCCNY keeps that vision and hope, that dream and prayer alive in me, no matter what. And so, I'm going to celebrate that Good News come September 19th at 10am and 7pm. I know some folks who are going to be celebrating with me that day — David Raleigh and his Little/Big Band • Our incomparable choirs under the direction of John Fischer • Our kitchen nymphs and elves under the direction of Ali Stafford who will create a feast fit for the saints — and all the people you and I have missed over the summer will be here fulfilling the only hope for peace and security any of us really have:

People coming from East and West
North and South
to sit at table together
in the Reign of God
and celebrate.

See you at the banquet of life!

Love,

The Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Farewell to the Assistant Pastor

The Query Newsletter extends thanks and best wishes to our Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini as she concludes 3 years of service as Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life on Homecoming Sunday.

Gala Dinner-Dance at the Copa Oct. 4th

By Mark Gilrain

The plans for "On this Rock 2004," MCCNY's October 4th gala Dinner-Dance at the Copa, are rocking.

Bob France, Esq., and Mark Gilrain are co-chairs of MCCNY's Capital Campaign committee, which is sponsoring the Dinner-Dance at the Copa on Monday, October 4th.

Honored guests will include three individuals who have stepped into the national spotlight in support of advancing civil rights for all people. Joining us to receive the Sylvia Rivera Justice in Action Awards will be:

- Mayor Jason West of New Paltz, New York.
- Mayor John Shields of Nyack, New York
- Deputy Mayor James Bruno of Asbury Park, New Jersey

Rev. Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, will share a message of insight and charisma with us that night. Other distinguished guests will include New York City elected leaders, visitors from around the Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, and friends from the ranks of our own church's pastoral alumni/ae. Of course there will be well-known entertainers, courtesy of the efforts of David Raleigh.

Tickets are on sale now. The donation is $125 per person. A table of ten is $1,250.

The Capital Campaign committee urges you – don't just attend yourself. Bring someone. Bring family or friends or co-workers, bring neighbors or the person who styles your hair. Bring anyone who shares our vision of service to the community, anyone who wants to share in this special festive evening of joy, this elegant banquet feast.

The date is Monday, October 4th, at 7 p.m. The location is the Copacabana on 34th Street at 11th Avenue, near MCCNY.

Coordinator 0f 40 + Ministry Moves to Florida

By Michele LaMontia

Michele LaMontia before leaving New York

Editor's note: Michele LaMontia, longtime coordinator of the church's "Second Coming – 40 + Ministry," which serves congregants who are age 40 and over, moved to Florida last month, along with her spouse, former MCCNY Board member Sherron Smith (a building management executive who among her many vital behind-the-scenes contributions always made sure MCCNY's furnace was serviced and ready to go at the start of each winter). In this valedictory letter to the congregation, Michele LaMontia recalls her faith journey at this church, asks for prayers as they face the challenges to come in Florida, and expresses confidence in the future of MCCNY's 40 + ministry:

How do I recap my 12 years at MCCNY and say good-bye? I joined this church as I was preparing to attend New York Theological Seminary. I became MCCNY's Outreach Committee chairperson. I was invited to join the Future Clergy group and became a Candidate for the Ordained Ministry but then discerned not to get ordained. There is a lot to say about this path and not enough room here to say it. I learned many lessons with you, and the most valuable is that Love never fails.

I have a home with you now and will soon have a home in Ft. Myers, Florida, with Sherron Smith, my life partner, and our precious pets. We are family, and we will continue to worship with the Metropolitan Community Churches family at MCCs in Ft. Myers and Sarasota. Please keep us in your prayers, as we are going to an area that is not as open to Queer life as NYC is. I believe that part of our work is to continue staying "Out" – bringing freedom and love to our community in Florida. This will not be easy. We will face homophobia wherever we go. The Queer community there needs to feel the rewards of coming out. We have our experiences at MCCNY and the many trials and tribulations that have helped us succeed to share with them. We have not come this far to go back in the closet. We carry you with us in our hearts and know this will give us the courage and strength to carry on the good work you have started.

Now a final question: *Who will step forward to lead MCCNY's 40 + ministry?* I'm asking those of you who are over 40 to consider being part of this ministry. Many of you meet the age requirement. I sometimes wonder if it's easier to come out as Queer than to come out as "over 40." I hope you're smiling at that comment! If interested, please see either Deacon Noah Buddy Seaton, Bob Hollinger or Rev. Pat. Thank you and God bless you.

MCCNYers in AIDS Walk

Maribelle Vasquez holds a colorful home-made MCCNY sign. Her spouse Sophia Pazos organized the church's contingent in the AIDS Walk on May 16, seeking to raise both funds and awareness to fight the ongoing AIDS crisis.

MCCNYers at Folsom Street East

Outreach volunteers staffed tables at numerous LGBT street fairs and festivals during June Pride Month, including the Folson Street East Festival which drew a crowd of many hundreds to its new location on West 28th Street on June 20th. MCCNY's stained glass window designer/creator Jackson Hall of Ft. Lauderdale, FL is at left in photo.

Praise & Worship Service Moves to 7:30 p.m. on First Wednesdays

Jean Schwartz recently made her public debut as a solo singer at MCCNY's monthly Praise and Worship Service, an informal and highly participatory Service organized by Rev. Michael Hydes. By popular request, the Praise & Worship Service has been moved to the first Wednesday of each month at 7:30 p.m. It immediately follows the weekly 7 p.m. Wednesday Midweek Worship and Communion Service with Rev. Franc Perry. The Praise and Worship Service is gaining adherents not only among those who attend but also online. It has become one of the most frequently downloaded items at the church's website, www.mccny.org.

Volunteer staff of The Query Newsletter:

Editor . . . . . Joe Kennedy

Graphic Design & Layout Editor . . . . . Les LaRue

Contributing photographers . . . . . Chris Baker, Valerie King, Deacon Danny Gonzalez

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor. You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018.
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org.

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 109.

Rev. Franc Perry Is Hailed For Youth Service Work

Rev. Franc Perry is congratulated by Mayor Bloomberg for his commitment to youth at the Mayor's annual summer Commissioner's Barbeque at Gracie Mansion. Rev. Franc is one of the Chairs of the Mayor's Youth Board which oversees the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. At MCCNY, Rev. Franc presides at the Midweek Worship and Communion Service (every Wednesday at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary). This month Rev. Franc and Rev. Michael Hydes become MCCNY's Co-Assistant Pastors for Congregational Life.

As the Newsletter was going to press, we learned of the passing of Marisol Santiago, a member and Scripture-reader at MCCNY who was well-known in the Latino/a LGBT activist community. She hosted "Marisol's Lesbian Nights" in the Bronx for many years. In recent years she was active in the Bronx Pride Parade and received a Pride Award.

Sylvia's Place Shelter for Homeless LGBTQ Youths Adds Job Training, Medical Check-Ups—and Even a Little Touch of Air Conditioning on Hot Summer Nights

By Rev. Michael Hydes

Editor's note: The summer of 2004 marked the third summer that a shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths has operated in MCCNY's social hall, and for the first time small air-conditioning units provided just a touch of relief for the youths who sleep there, lowering the sweltering temperature by a few degrees and taking some of the humidity out of the air. But (HINT TO DONORS) more and bigger air conditioners are still needed to do a better job in the years ahead. Rev. Michael Hydes, Director of MCCNY's year-round Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths, files this report on some other recent improvements at the youth shelter and some of the generous people who make them possible.

We have a new washer and dryer, a godsend for doing the kids' washing. A new industrial strength shower stall has been installed. Staff counselors Tanino Minneci, Lucky Michaels, Michelle Slack and Eustacia (Staci) Smith give enormously to the kids who make Sylvia's Place their home. Ali Stafford, director of MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry, makes sure there is always enough to eat and helps in many other ways. There have been anonymous gifts of toiletries, towels, bed linen and clothing including underwear and socks; more is always needed. Toby brings in books for the kids to keeps up their interest in reading. If someone wants to give them a real treat, then pop in one evening and order pizza and soda for them – they'll love you forever!

In conjunction with MCCNY, the technical school TCI has put together a number of courses which are available to all MCCNYers including the shelter youths. TCI has opened up their resume writing class (Mondays and Wednesdays) to us, free of charge. We are setting up Computer classes and a Job Skills Workshop which will take place over 8 weeks and includes resume writing, job interviews, how to dress for success and a host of other issues. Ed Vladich, whose work is highly rated, will also hold workshops in November and again in February.

The medical facilities truck from Project Renewal now visits Sylvia's Place Shelter once a month with a doctor, a dentist and a dispensing pharmacy aboard. Kate Barnhart, well-known for her work at the Neutral Zone, generously volunteers her time and invaluable experience to Sylvia's Place on a weekly basis. Lynda Marsh does amazing work in applying for funding to keep the youth shelter operating and improving, but more contributions are always needed and most welcome.

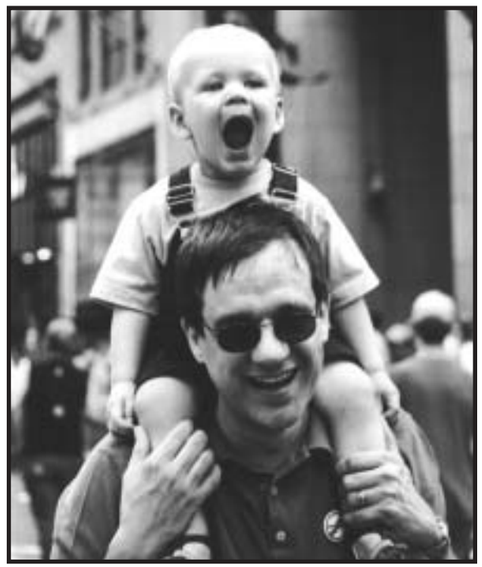
Every night of the year no fewer than six homeless LGBTQ youths find shelter and safety at Sylvia's Place in MCCNY's social hall. Alfonso, Jeffrey and Alex did not shrink from the opportunity to put a human face on that term "homeless LGBTQ youths" for Newsletter readers when a photographer dropped by one recent morning. Your donation now will make sure there are more air conditioners next summer to keep promising kids like these from sweltering on hot humid nights. Please be generous.

Leather Pride Donates $5,000 to Homeless Youth Shelter

Trai La Trash, Empress of NYC's Imperial Court, greets representatives of MCCNY's Sylvia's Place Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths as they arrive at Leather Pride Night at the Puck Building in June to pick up a $5,000 donation from Leather Pride to Sylvia's Place (left to right in photo, Tanino Minneci, Ms. Trash, Lucky Michaels, Rev. Michael Hydes, Chris Baker). In a separate fund-raiser, volunteers organized by Rev. Michael Hydes supplied food on the Metrobears Pride boat trip and raised an additional $2,500 for the shelter. According to the *Query* Newsletter's sources, the Bears raved that the food on the boat had never been so good and MCCNY's "hunky" volunteers stole the day.

MCCNY MARCHES WITH PRIDE

Sunday, June 27th
35th Anniversary of Stonewall Riots



"The largest, most flamboyant contingents included gay men with strollers and the Metropolitan Community Church."

Fay Jacobs, The Advocate, *August 31, 2004*

Pride photos by VALERIE KING

MCCNYer on Grand Marshal Float

Early LGBT Activists, including MCCNY Board member Joe Kennedy (photo at left), were Grand Marshals of this year's Heritage of Pride (HOP) march, which marked the 35th anniversary of the June 1969 Stonewall Riots that started the modern LGBT liberation movement. Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, Founder (in 1968) and Moderator of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, was one of the early activists invited by HOP, but he had already agreed to be a Grand Marshal of the San Francisco Pride celebrations the same day.

The current issue of Lambda Book Report magazine interviews Joe about gay activist history and reprints this 1970s front-page newspaper picture of him (from the now-defunct *Gaysweek*) when his activism was in the headlines.

Top photo at left courtesy DOUG MEZLER.
Bottom photo at left courtesy Mark Segal/Philadelphia Gay News.

NYC Comptroller & City Council Honor MCCNY

Rev. Pat Bumgardner (front left) and "Avenue Q" star John Tartaglia (next to her) were among those honored by NYC Comptroller William Thompson (front center) at the Comptroller's annual LGBT Pride Celebration, on June 10th at the LGBT Community Center on West 13th Street.

MCCNY's choir (below) was given the unique honor to perform before hundreds at the Comptroller's Pride Celebration. The choir, doing the songs they do in church, were so popular they were called back to the stage by Comptroller Thompson for an encore performance.

Hundreds more filled the ornate City Council Chambers at New York City Hall on June 14th for a Pride Celebration hosted by Speaker Gifford Miller and the three out LGBT Councilmembers. Rev. Pat delivered an invocation.

Starting on Easter Sunday!

MCCNY Adds a 3rd Worship Service Every Sunday: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 7 p.m.

Another Momentous Milestone in Growth for NYC's LGBT Church

Starting on Easter Sunday, and on every Sunday thereafter, Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY), the church of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people open to all, will celebrate three Sunday Worship Services: at 9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 7 p.m.

From its founding in 1972 until 1990, MCCNY held only one Worship Service each Sunday, at 7 p.m. Then a morning Worship Service was added. But as the congregation has grown in recent years, the morning Worship Service increasingly draws a virtually full house in the 250-seat sanctuary, making the need for an additional morning Worship Service evident.

Civil Disobedience on behalf of Civil Rights: MCCNY takes over the NY City Clerk's chapel.

See Page One

Mark your calendars and choose the Worship Service that is most convenient for your schedule, starting Easter Sunday: 9 a.m., 11 a.m. or 7 p.m. every Sunday.

Holy Week and Easter Schedule

Wednesday, March 23rd — 7pm . . . . . Footwashing Liturgy with Rev. Franc and Rev. Edgard

Holy Thursday, March 24th — 7pm . . . . . Queer Liberation Seder with Rev. Kristen and Rev. Edgard

Good Friday, March 25th — 7pm . . . . . Stations of the Cross ✢ Rev. Troy Perry, preaching

Holy Saturday, March 26th — 3pm . . . Annual Easter Banquet: "To God be the Glory" honoring the life and ministry of Rev. Troy Perry

7pm . . . . . Easter Vigil: Lighting of the New Fire ✢ Rev. Troy Perry, preaching

Easter Sunday, March 27th 9am • 11am • 7pm . . . . . Liturgy of the Resurrection ✢ Mass Choir ✢ Rev. Troy Perry, preaching

Starting on Easter Sunday! **MCCNY Adds a 3rd Worship Service Every Sunday: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 7 p.m.**

A Very SPECIAL Easter Weekend: **Rev. Troy Perry's Last Great Stand in NY Before Retirement as Head of MCC**

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Same-Sex Marriages Solemnized in NY City Clerk's Chapel

Pastor and Equality Advocates March in and Take Over in a Valentine's Day 'Witness for Justice'

In a historic first, same-sex marriages were solemnized in the New York City Clerk's chapel on Valentine's Day. Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY), presided.

It was, Rev. Pat told the news media, a "witness for justice." Mayor Bloomberg and City Clerk Victor Robles are refusing to obey State Supreme Court Justice Doris Ling-Cohen's ruling that discrimination against same-sex couples in marriage violates the state constitution.

The Valentine's Day protest was carried out with the panache worthy of LGBT activism's bold history. When Mary Jane Gibney, standing by the chapel entrance, gave the signal – *"Queers, move in!"* – Rev. Pat and the marriage equality advocates barreled in and took over the chapel. Guards could only sputter, "Stop, you can't do this!" and send out a call for reinforcements.

Rev. Pat instantly pealed off a black cape to reveal her full liturgical vestments (as *Gay City News* reported) and began the marriage rites, using the justice of the peace's lectern in the chapel (photo at right). Later, Rev. Pat solemnized more marriages in the Marriage License Bureau hallway outside the chapel. In all, Rev. Pat married three gay male couples and one lesbian couple.

When the ceremonies were over, some of the happily wedded same-sex couples wept for joy, even heterosexual couples nearby applauded them, and City Clerk Robles was left to mutter about Rev. Pat with scarcely concealed admiration, "She is persistent!" Indeed, persistence in the pursuit of social justice is MCCNY's hallmark.

Photos by Boon Lin Ngeo.

Spring 2005

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

Staten Island Advance

Gays seize the day

Tuesday, February 15, 2005

By MELISSA ANELLI – STATEN ISLAND ADVANCE

They were going to the chapel, and they were gonna get married, and no one was going to stop them.

Yesterday, 10 days after state Supreme Court Justice Doris Ling-Cohan ruled that New York's ban on same-sex marriage is unconstitutional, and less than a week after the city filed its appeal on the ruling, two gay couples from Staten Island were among four to be "married" in the city clerk's office.

The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, an outspoken gay-rights activist from the Metropolitan Community Church of New York, performed the unofficial ceremonies. She led Gerard Mawn and Angel Love-Figueroa of Castleton Corners into the clerk's chapel, disregarding staffers standing outside who objected, "You can't do this!"

Rev. Bumgardner said they became the first gay couple ever to be married in that chapel.

But the marriages are not currently legal under state law—the clerk's office rejected the four gay couples' applications for marriage licenses, citing the necessity of waiting for the results of the city's appeal.

Pastor's Easter Message

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Easter 2005

Dear friends:

In John's 20th chapter from which we will read this Easter Sunday, Mary of Magdala first finds an empty tomb and then runs to tell the other disciples who, John records, fail to understand what rising from the dead means—they lock themselves away in fear. Subsequently, Jesus will pass through those locked doors.

In the story from Acts, the 10th chapter, that is paired with the Easter Gospel, everyone is amazed at the diversity/the range of humanity God blesses with the gift of the Holy Spirit.

"Truly," Peter says, "I see that God doesn't play favorites."
(Acts 10:34)

It is the beginning of what will become, for Peter and other followers of the way, a more universal understanding of the love of God—what rising from the dead really means.

We, at MCCNY, have long professed and sought to practice that understanding and foundational belief. From the vision of building a multi-cultural community of faith to the Food Pantry's philosophy of turning no one away to the open doors of Sylvia's Place (our shelter for homeless Queer and questioning youth), we have really tried to attach our hopes to our faith in the love of God for all the people of God, not to our fears about what such an open-door policy might mean.

The new stained glass windows throughout our building (to be dedicated on Easter Sunday at 11 a.m.) testify to this passion, portraying human beings in rainbow variety heading toward the light.

In many ways, we've done a good job, clinging to the vision/to the hope that on earth peace can reign and we can live together as one family. In fact, we've done such a good job that we must now make choices that will accommodate the growth we've already experienced and the growth that undoubtedly lies before us—we must make choices that keep our doors open in faith, not closed in fear; not blocking anyone from experiencing the depth of blessing we already here have received. And so ... on Easter Sunday, March 27th we will introduce a third Sunday celebration and new worship time.

MCCNY has never been the type of community to be held back by our fears or projections about what change will mean or ask of us as individuals or as a people; we have never been derailed from our vision of inclusive community by what others say is possible or impossible, or by what we have or do not have. We have simply been true to God and God has been true to us.

WE KNOW we can do all things through the One who strengthens us
BECAUSE that's the only thing that's been consistent for us: that universal love—what the Resurrection was all about.

Change always requires some adjustment—these particular changes will require increased commitment on the part of some members of our Pastoral Staff—but I have to agree with St. Paul: those changes, the adjustments and rearrangements they require, will seem as nothing compared to the glory of God that is revealed when the children of God can find their way into the house of God.

MCCNY is that house of God for all the people of God. I can think of no better time to celebrate that Good News than on Easter Sunday. My prayer is simply that you will join in celebrating what the Resurrection means with joy and thanksgiving at...

9 a.m.	*Traditional Service*
11 a.m.	*Former 10 a.m. Celebration*
	+ Dedication of Stained Glass Windows
	+ Reception of New Members
7 p.m.	*Praise and Worship*

It will be our distinct blessing and privilege to have The Rev. Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of Metropolitan Community Churches, preaching all day long! To God be the glory!

With love,

Rev. Pat

Staff Transitions

Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales will be installed as MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life in May. Until then, he is transitioning into the Assistant Pastor's position by serving part-time at MCCNY while fulfilling his contractal obligations as a tenured Professor of physical chemistry at the University of Puerto Rico…Until Rev. Edgard is installed into his full-time post, former Assistant Pastor **Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini** will continue to serve part-time at MCCNY as well… **Rev. Franc Perry** has received a call from **MCC Atlanta** to serve on staff as their **Traveling Evangelist** starting in April. Rev. Franc will continue to reside in NYC with his spouse, former MCCNY Board member Jeff Bornheimer, and their child Ruby.

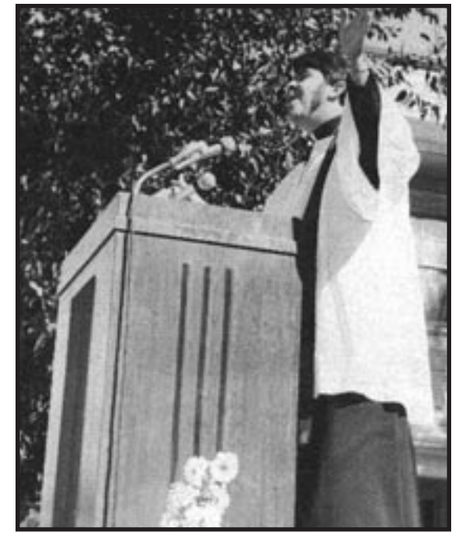
A Very SPECIAL Easter Weekend

Rev. Troy Perry's Last Great Stand in NY Before Retirement as Head of MCC

Rev. Elder Troy D. Perry, a leading figure in LGBT Liberation movement history who founded the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination in 1968 in Los Angeles, retires as the MCC denomination's Moderator this year.

Tribute Luncheon Set for 3 p.m. Holy Saturday at Union Theological Seminary

He will be feted by MCCNY at a once-in-a-lifetime, not-to-be-missed luncheon tribute at Union Theological Seminary on Holy Saturday, March 26th, at 3 p.m. Public officials and LGBT celebrities and community leaders will be present, and special musicians will perform. Tickets are $50 and may be obtained by calling the church office at 212 629-7440.



He'll Preach at MCCNY on Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday

Rev. Perry will be preaching at MCCNY's Worship Services on Good Friday (7 p.m., with music by Lavender Light Gospel Choir), on Holy Saturday (Easter Vigil liturgy at 7 p.m.), and at the three Easter Sunday Services (9 a.m., 11 a.m., and 7 p.m.). He will preach different, original sermons at the morning and evening Worship Services on Easter. The evening sermon promises to be especially moving as he bids New York adieu for the last time before his retirement as head of MCC.

On May 1st, Rev. Perry will be one of 40 LGBT social justice activists of historic stature honored in Philadelphia at "Equality Forum," billed as one of the biggest LGBT gatherings ever. In July, he will retire at the MCC General Conference in Canada. His successor as denominational Moderator (subject to General Conference ratification) will be Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson.

Rev. Troy Perry, then and now: In the early 1970s (photo above right) his charismatic personality resulted in phenomenal growth at MCC Los Angeles and launched the world's first predominantly-LGBT denomination. Last year (photo left), he blessed MCCNY's Jeff Bornheimer and Ruby. Happily, Jeff's effort to become Ruby's adoptive parent took a major step forward in Court on this February 14th.

Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

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& Layout Editor . . . . . Les LaRue

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor. You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

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446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018.
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org.

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Answering the Call: A Malaysian Hero

Boon Lin Ngeo of Malaysia has begun the road toward ordination as a clergyperson in the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. He is beginning seminary at the Episcopal Divinity School in Boston and is a Formation student for the ordained ministry at MCCNY, which is a Teaching Church in the MCC denomination. Boon is the author of a ground-breaking book in Malaysia (entitled God Loves Gays) and hopes some day soon to open the first MCC church in his native Malaysia, an extremely courageous move in a country ruled by a repressive authoritarian government that brands all LGBT people as criminals.

Boon Lin Ngeo: Brave and strong morally and physically.

Bringing God's Love to the Places It Is Needed:

Generosity Helps NYC Youths in Homeless Shelter—

Every night of the year, no fewer than six homeless LGBTQ youths find shelter at the Sylvia's Place Shelter at MCCNY, a unique and life-saving resource for the LGBT community and its most vulnerable members—youths who have been rejected and thrown out by their families of origin because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. At Christmas, the generosity of the congregation made it possible to provide the shelter with the youths' most requested items including a **PLAY STATION**. The congregation's generosity also provided specific toys for 168 children of clients at MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry—a toy for every child for whom a request was received by the Food Pantry.

The Youth Shelter and Food Panty are grateful to the many people in the LGBT community who raise money for their good work. Fundraising events recently were held at **Pieces** on Christopher Street and at the **View** on Eighth Avenue, where Empress Trai La Trash and the Imperial Court hosted and entertained.

You can contribute by sending a check to MCCNY, 446 W. 36th Street, NY, NY 10018, attn: Youth Shelter and/or Food Pantry.

—And Tsunami Victims in Asia

In the week after the horrific Dec. 26th tsunami disaster in Asia, the congregation responded with prayers and gave generously to a special collection to help the tsunami's victims. More than $2,200 was collected and promptly forwarded to the organization Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres).

MCCNYers felt a special bond with people in the hardest-hit country, Indonesia, because a Christian minister in that country had informed MCCNY via email on Dec. 7th that he was gratefully using the sermons and information available on MCCNY's Website to "share the good news" of God's love for LGBT people in Indonesia where that truth is too infrequently told.

Dorothy John died at the age of 93 on February 23, 2005. She was MCCNY's oldest member and one of the most faithful volunteers at the church's Food Pantry, where she helped feed the hungry every week for the last 20 years. Her funeral was held at the church on March 6th.

Truck-Driving 'Red-Shoed Rev.' Rides to Yuletide Rescue

Rev. Kristen and Sophia Get the Stained Glass Windows to the Church on Time in an Amazing 2,600-Mile Dash

Maribelle Vasquez & Sophia Pazos: *Sophia (at right) helped transport the new windows. Her spouse Maribelle received a 2004 PRIDE award at the annual award ceremony of the Puerto Rican Initiative to Develop Empowerment (PRIDE) and the Latino Gay Men of New York on Nov. 19th. The award honored Maribelle's leadership role at MCCNY and in its Arcoiris [Rainbow] Latino de Cristo ministry.*

If it were a fictional story, a fairy tale of make-believe, it couldn't have been more dramatic. But it was really happening:

MCCNY's congregation was waiting—expectantly; dare we say even a bit impatiently—for the promised arrival of the new stained glass windows during the Christmas season. But at the last moment word came from Ft. Lauderdale, where designer Jackson Hall and his team had created the windows, that the truck driver who was to bring the precious cargo to NYC could not do it because of a loved one's health emergency. Then, incredibly, a back-up driver who had been hired suffered the same fate. The situation looked grim.

Seeing the light: Looking at the newly-installed brightly colorful stained glass windows from inside the sanctuary in January. (photos by Lynn Scott).

But instead of Rudolph the reindeer, to the rescue in this real-life adventure came MCCNY's Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini and congregant Sophia Pazos, a respected LGBT community leader and activist. On the spot they dropped everything in their lives and drove to Ft. Lauderdale, loaded the stained glass windows in a truck, and dashed back to New York—an amazing race of 2,600 miles round-trip.

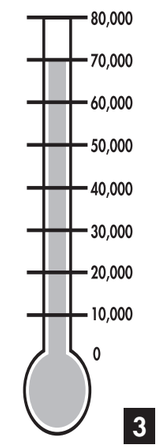
Readers of recent issues of *The Query* Newsletter know that Rev. Kristen could hardly be more beloved and popular in the congregation. But this feat inspired new accolades, including a song sung by Bradley Curry about the legendary deeds of one "Kristen, the Red-Shoed Reverend."

Typifying her humility, Rev. Kristen's only comment about the heroics when approached by the Newsletter was to say, "Make sure you give Sophia equal credit."

Now the Push Is On to Raise the Last $10,000 to Pay for Them; 'New Windows Are the Start, Not the End of Building Upgrades'

In barely over a year, MCCNY has raised most of the money needed to pay for the creation and installation of the new stained glass windows that have been installed on the front of the church building facing West 36th Street. The big push is on now to raise the remaining $10,000 so this project will be 100% paid for and complete. Contributions can be mailed to: MCCNY, 446 West 36th Street, NY, NY 10018, attn: new windows. Please be generous.

The dedication of the new windows marks the culmination of the most visible building beautification project in MCCNY's history. But, as a Board member recently remarked to the congregation, it is only "the beginning, not the end" of significant building upgrades – with even bigger and more ambitious projects coming soon as MCCNY strives ever harder and more successfully to fulfill its goal of being "the Spiritual Home of the LGBT community in the New York metropolitan area."



$80,000: Cost of stained glass windows
$70,000: Contributed to date
Please donate now to close the $10,000 gap

Christmas

Rev. Edgard Danielsen-Morales, Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Rev. Franc Perry

David Raleigh's medley of Christmas carols

Christmas Eve congregation

Christmas Photos by Deacon Danny Gonzalez

Kwanzaa

Board member Gayle Davis in the pulpit.

Rev. Edgard celebrates the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

Deaconess Moshay Moses, facilitator of MCCNY's GenderPeople ministry, sings "Bless This House."

Deacon Michelle Cherry-Slack: putting the Kwanzaa principles into action.

Kwanzaa Photos by William Moran

New Members

Welcomed into formal membership during Worship by Rev. Pat recently are (left to right) Christopher Bramfitt & Scott Cawood, Jean Schnell, and Dan Vaca.

Congregants at coffee hour in the social hall after the Worship Service.

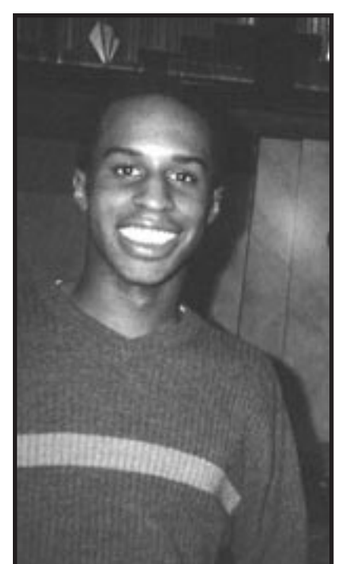
Martin Luther King Day

Rev. Candy Holmes was the guest preacher at MCCNY's Worship Services on Martin Luther King Sunday. She is the former Music Director at MCC/DC and is currently on staff at Christ the Liberator MCC in North Brunswick, NJ. (MCCNY this year also hosted the 8th annual LGBT Interfaith Celebration of Rev. Dr. King's Birthday on Jan. 20. Bishop Zachery Jones of Unity Fellowship Church was the keynote speaker. Rev. Gail Jones of Renewed Life Ministries and MCCNY's Pastor Rev. Pat Bumgardner addressed the event, and Rev. Franc Perry sang.)

WORLD AIDS DAY

The AIDS crisis is not over. On Dec. 1st, Rev. Franc Perry's Midweek Worship Service at MCCNY [Wednesdays at 7 p.m.] hosted a preview of the play **"Four Angels Released"** performed by the **Liberation Players**, a group affiliated with Christ the Liberator MCC in North Brunswick, NJ. The play consists of 15 one-act scenes, each addressing a different aspect of the AIDS crisis (for instance, the sinful bigotry of some religious leaders who oppose the life-saving use of condoms). It was written by **Rev. Durrell Watkins**, Pastor of MCC North Brunswick. On Feb. 6, "Four Angels Released" had its theatrical premiere at the Wings Theater in the Archives building on Christopher Street.

Soloist's Debut



Nick Sinckler joined the MCCNY choir and treated the congregation to a solo at Worship Services recently.

MCC Women's Conference

Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini (far left) and Rev. Pat Bumgardner (next to her) were among the participants from our local Region at the MCC Women in Ministry Conference last month in Sarasota, FL. Not pictured but also present were MCCNYers Ali Stafford and Linda Marsh.

Summer 2005

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

Shelter for Homeless LGBTQ Youths Begins 4th Year of Operation at Church

Every night of the year, no fewer than six homeless LGBTQ youths—the most needy and vulnerable people in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community—find desperately-needed refuge—safe emergency housing— at the **Sylvia's Place Shelter** operated by Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) at the church on West 36th Street in Manhattan.

Many of the LGBTQ youths who come to the shelter have been thrown out by hateful, bigoted parents because of their sexual orientation or gender identity; others are the victims of poverty, racism or other incredibly cruel circumstances. The one thing they have in common is that they are LGBTQ and homeless, so they have no other safe place they can go.

Sylvia's Place Shelter is named for Saint **Sylvia Rivera**, the legendary fiery longtime LGBT activist who served as Director of **MCCNY's Food Pantry** in the years before her death in February 2002, and whose deathbed wish to Rev. Pat Bumgardner was that a way be found against all odds to open a homeless queer youth shelter at the church.

THREE YEARS AGO:

The Query Newsletter reported the opening in June 2002 of a shelter for homeless queer youths at MCCNY.

Shelter for Homeless Queer Youths Opens at the Church

A long-sought dream became reality on June 16th when the **Ali Forney Center for Homeless LGBT Youth** opened its doors at Metropolitan Community Church of New York. Every night of the week, from 8 p.m. until 8 a.m., the church's social hall becomes a shelter where homeless queer youths can find a safe place to shower and sleep, and be assisted in getting the social services they need to move from surviving to thriving. While the shelter seeks to help and counsel all who enter, by law its cots can sleep no more than **six youths** a night at the present time.

The Query
NEWSLETTER
Metropolitan Community Church of New York
September 2002

As the Need Grows, NY City Council Considers Increasing Funding

In recent weeks, the urgency of the crisis confronting thousands of LGBTQ youths on the streets—the grave disparity between the magnitude of the problem and the inadequacy of the response—has been the focus of hearings by the New York City Council and of major articles in both of NYC's gay weekly newspapers *(see below)*. There is a new spotlight on the unique life-saving work of Sylvia's Place Shelter and its need for increased funding, particularly from Government sources. Thanks to volunteer grant-writer Lynda Marsh, funding for the shelter has gone up. But much more is needed for expansion of shelter services: Send donations to MCCNY, 446 W. 36th St., NY, NY 10018, attn: Sylvia's Place Shelter.

Spearheading an intensive year-long effort to increase funding from the City of New York for queer youth facilities, including the Sylvia's Place Shelter, is **Dirk McCall** *(below left)*, president of the Stonewall Democratic Club of New York and chief of staff to City Councilmember Alan Gerson. Other recent social justice accomplishments by Dirk and Councilmember Gerson include winning passage on May 11th by the City Council of a Resolution, endorsed by **Rev. Pat Bumgardner**, demanding an end to the discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy by the nation's largest employer, the U.S. armed forces.

*A lengthy article in GAY CITY NEWS (Apr. 28-May 4) made graphically clear why **LGBTQ youths cannot stay at youth shelters like Covenant House**, where appalling violence and discrimination against them seems to be officially tolerated, even encouraged:*

Queer Youth Options Remain Slim

As small facilities targeting LGBT young people grow, City Council weighs greater funding

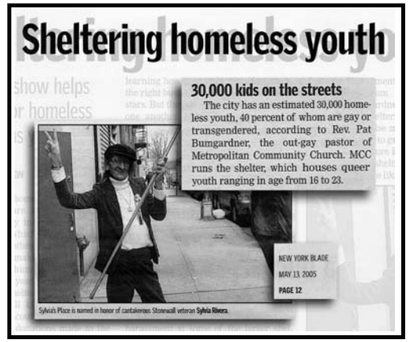
Her first stint at Covenant House was brief. She arrived one evening, while still dressed and identifying as a boy, with a group of friends. One of her friends told the other young male Covenant House residents that Artis was gay. They ganged up on her quickly, pelting her with batteries and calling her a faggot. At dinner, they pushed her to the floor, telling her, "Faggots don't eat with us."

She spent the night sleeping on the floor—"faggots" don't sleep on beds, the other clients told her.

"It was scary, it was hard, but I thought positive," she said. "You know, I have Sylvia's Place."

Gay City
28 APR - 4 MAY 2005

Sylvia's Place Shelter was the subject of a full-page article in the May 13th edition of the NY BLADE, including a vintage picture of Sylvia Rivera waving a Rainbow LGBT Pride flag outside MCCNY to signal that the Food Pantry was open.



Sheltering homeless youth

30,000 kids on the streets

The city has an estimated 30,000 homeless youth, 40 percent of whom are gay or transgendered, according to Rev. Pat Bumgardner, the out-gay pastor of Metropolitan Community Church. MCC runs the shelter, which houses queer youth ranging in age from 16 to 23.

NEW YORK BLADE
MAY 13 2005
PAGE 12

Sylvia's Place is named in honor of cantankerous Stonewall veteran Sylvia Rivera.

Transition at the Top in MCC

REV. ELDER TROY D. PERRY receives a NY City Council Proclamation in his honor from Councilmembers **Phil Reed** and **Margarita Lopez** *(photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)* at an MCCNY tribute to Rev. Perry on Holy Saturday at Union Theological Seminary. Rev. Perry, Founder of the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, retires as MCC Moderator on October 8th. Excerpts from Rev. Pat Bumgardner's citation:

"Troy re-read the Scriptures and discovered the truth: God's love is for all people. Nine months before the Stonewall Rebellion, Troy Perry took out an ad in a local newspaper and opened his home in suburban Los Angeles to what would become Metropolitan Community Churches. From 13 people at that first Service on October 6th, 1968, to tens of thousands today in over 300 churches in 23 countries—the Rev. Troy Perry founded what would become the world's largest Queer organization… His bravery and conviction opened the door for the recognition of Queer rights as human rights…His voice and his vision have become synonymous with the quest for just and right relationship prevailing in this world…The Rev. Troy Perry is the living embodiment of God's cry in this world, 'Let my people go!' He is the Moses of our people and the Prophet of God."

REV. ELDER NANCY WILSON *(at right)* will be elected the next MCC Moderator at the MCC General Conference in Calgary, Canada (July 21-26) and will take office on October 8th. She is the Pastor of MCC Sarasota in Florida and former Pastor of MCC Los Angeles (the "mother church") and other MCC congregations. She was elected to the MCC Board of Elders in 1976 and served as MCC's Ecumenical Officer for 20 years and MCC Vice Moderator for 10 years. Rev. Wilson is the author of ***Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus and the Bible*** (Alamo Press). Before her MCC ministry, she was active in the United Methodist Church. She lives with her partner of 27 years, Dr. Paula Schoenwether.

Pride Sunday : June 26th

Pride Sunday Services at MCCNY, 446 W. 36th St. NYC:

9 a.m., 11 a.m., 7 p.m. Rev. Pat Bumgardner, preaching, with MCCNY Choir and special musicians

*Look for MCCNY's contingent in the 36th annual LGBT Pride March—giving away MCCNY's signature **"God Made Me Queer"** stickers, marching with colorful banners and flags, and featuring a giant float with **David Raleigh's Band** and the MCCNY Choir directed by **John Fischer** aboard performing award-winning live Gospel and inspirational music.*

• Homeless Youth Shelter May Get More Funds: Pg 1
• Disillusioned with New Pope? MCCNY Has a Solution: Pg 3

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Pastor's Pride Proclamation

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets."
—Jesus

June 2005

Dear friends:

As Matthew closes what we have come to know as "The Sermon on the Mount," he offers a central principle by which all our struggles, personal and political, are to be addressed:

"In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

The law and the prophets are often at odds in our society:

Mayor Jason West's bold and prophetic actions in New Paltz on behalf of marriage equality, set him in conflict with the law (or, at least one interpretation of that law) and he will shortly stand trial for his courage and conviction.

Florin Buceanu, founder of ACCEPT, and The Rev. Diane Fisher, found themselves in conflict with the representatives of "law and order" as they prophetically battled for the first Queer Pride March in Bucharest last month. In culmination, Rev. Fisher celebrated the first open MCC worship service in Romania with coverage on national television.

Sometimes what is "legal" and what is prophetic are at odds, but the call of the Gospel is to bring the two together; to make what is legal, prophetic in its vision.—And that I believe is what Queer people all over the globe are doing right now. From Warsaw where Queer rights advocates struggle to imitate the victory in Bucharest to the recent victory in New Jersey giving baby Vivian two legal mommies on her birth certificate to Housing Works winning its case against New York City and contract law that essentially robbed people living with AIDS of the kind and quality of shelter needed. AND—we are not alone in our efforts: The Health Minister of Kenya simply declared universal health coverage in that country. Her prophetic vision is becoming a legal reality. The NAACP joined over 300 other organizations in calling for marriage equality in California—"different laws for different people have no place in our society," they said.

"Equal rights—no more, no less" is the Pride theme in New York City this year, and it is a theme that resonates deeply with the call of the Gospel—a theme, a vision, a mission that is at the heart of our witness at MCCNY. Every day, we try to make what is legal match the prophetic vision of this world living as one people—in our consistent and persistent battle for equal marriage rights; in our consistent and persistent efforts to make sure that no one falls through the cracks when it comes to food, shelter, health care or a job. And that is something to be very proud of.

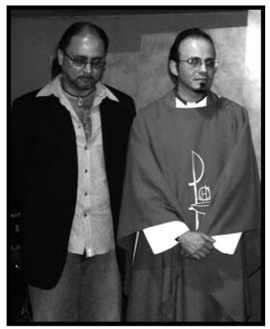
I know of no other single group of people more committed to the vision of prophetic equality than the members and friends of MCC throughout the world, and I am proud to be a part of this great movement for freedom. I am proud of you. I hope you will be here on Pride Sunday as we celebrate our lives and loves and the blessing we, as a people, are to the wider world around us.

With love,

Rev. Pat

Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales Installed As Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life

In a joyful, Spirit-filled ceremony on Pentecost Sunday, **Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales** was installed as MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life. His years of successful ministry as a pastor, professor and liberation theologian in San Juan, Puerto Rico bode well for his tenure in New York. Rev. Edgard has been honored to be chosen as one of a handful of clergymembers from around the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination who will preach at the **MCC General Conference** (July 21-26 in Alberta, Canada).



Rev. Edgard and his spouse William Moran at the investiture ceremony on Pentecost.

Also on Pentecost, MCCNY again thanked former Assistant Pastor **Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini** for her more than three and a half years of devoted service at this church. She will continue to conduct MCCNY's church retreats several times a year while residing in Maine with her spouse, Rev. Tawnee Walling.

Rev. Kristen being thanked.

*(photos by **Ali Stafford**)*

"Fashion on Gender" Show Raises $2,000 For Sylvia's Charities at MCCNY

MCCNY's 250-seat sanctuary was packed to beyond standing-room-only and—sadly—some late-comers even had to be turned away when **Deaconess Moshay Moses** and MCCNY's GenderPeople ministry hosted the **"Fashion on Gender"** charity fund-raising fashion show on May 24th. The dazzling show was MC'd by **Trai La Trash** and raised money for the church's Food Pantry and homeless queer youth shelter, both of which are named for the late legendary transgender activist and MCCNY member Saint Sylvia Rivera. It was the 3rd annual Fashion on Gender show and the best-attended yet, and received considerable publicity in mainstream publications from *Time Out NY* to the free daily *Metro*.

Deaconess Moshay Moses

*Models on the runway: photos by **Willie Davis***

Deacon Bali White in India to Work with the Hijras

Bali White *(at left)*, a Deacon at MCCNY and member of the church's **GenderPeople** ministry, is returning to her home of India this summer to help the Hijras, a community of transgender women in India who were the traditional priestesses of their community but have now been cast aside and face staggering rates of HIV/AIDS. Deacon Bali has received a scholarship from the American Institute of Indian Studies to pay her travel expenses to India for this mission, but private donations from many people including MCCNYers will provide for her living expenses. Additional donations to this fund may be made by check to Bali White, c/o the church office.

Queens Borough President's Award Goes To Deacon Noah Seaton

Noah (Buddy) Seaton *(pictured at right)* is a long-time well-known LGBT activist in New York City—and a popular Deacon at MCCNY. For many years Noah has been a mainstay at **Heritage of Pride (HOP)**, the volunteer group that organizes the June Pride events in Manhattan including the rally in Bryant Park, the march down Fifth Avenue and through the Village on the last Sunday in June, the dance on the pier and the glorious LGBT Pride fireworks over the Hudson. Noah, a health care professional, is also a lieutenant in the **NYPD** Auxiliary and a member of American Veterans for Equal Rights **(AVER)**, the LGBT U.S. military veterans organization. So it is not surprising that Noah was named this Pride month as one of 8 recipients of the **Volunteer of the Year Award** in his home borough of Queens. The Pride award will presented by Queens Borough President Helen Marshall on June 29th at Queens Borough Hall.

Telephoning Topeka for Equal Rights

MCCNYers *(picture at left)* were among the volunteers who phoned voters in Topeka, Kansas in a successful effort to convince them to defeat a referendum that would have repealed equal rights protections in employment for LGBT people and abolished hate crimes laws in Topeka. The volunteer phone banks were organized by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF), whose senior field organizer Elias Rojas spoke to the congregation. The anti-LGBT referendum was defeated by Topeka voters, 53% to 47%, on March 1st.

Evangelist Preaches & Sings at MCCNY

Rev. Delores Berry, a famed evangelist and Gospel singer in the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, preached and sang at MCCNY recently. Her LGBT-inclusified adapatation of the Josh Groban hit "You Lift Me Up" moved many congregants to tears. Rev. Delores' CD **"God Put a Rainbow in the Sky"** is available at www.RevDeloresBerry.com. The title alludes to the Rainbow LGBT Pride flag, of course, and to Genesis 9:13 where (as the Book of Hours says) after the Great Flood "the Most High displayed the rainbow, a sign of covenant and peace."

*Rev. Delores Berry is flanked by Rev. Pat Bumgardner and Rev. Edgard Danielsen-Morales. (photo by Board member **Gayle Davis**)*

Crossing the Brooklyn Bridge for Marriage Equality

MCCNY's social justice ministry came out for the two-thousand-people-strong 2nd annual **Marriage Equality** march across the Brooklyn Bridge on May 22nd. Joe Kennedy, Dale Urban and Dion Brown *(left, photo by **Andy Humm**)* carried the MCCNY banner. MCCNY was one of more than a dozen organizations co-sponsoring the Marriage Equality march, which received coverage on the leading TV newscasts and in the major daily newspapers. MCCNY's "God Made Us Queer" banner was seen on NY1 News and Fox5 among others. Rev. Pat Bumgardner (along with officials such as City Council Speaker Gifford Miller, Public Advocate Betsy Gotbaum and New Paltz Mayor Jason West) spoke at the rally that concluded the march while Ari Gold and other big names provided entertainment.

MCCNY's Video Ministry Celebrates 10 Years on Cable

July 4th weekend this year brings a special reason to celebrate. It marks the 10th anniversary of the first telecast of MCCNY's Sunday Worship Services. They've been on the air ever since then. The broadcasts feature videotaped highlights of recent Worship Services, including the sermons by Rev. Pat Bumgarder and guest preachers, and the music by MCCNY's choir directed by John Fischer. The hour-long broadcasts are available to all of the hundreds of thousands of cable households in Manhattan at **8:30 am on Sundays on Time Warner channel 57 and RCN channel 109**.

*Cameraperson **(Cheryl) Gerald Tucker** (right) and **Rev. Michael Hydes** are part of the video ministry crew that has made MCCNY's Worship Services available to hundreds of thousands of households every Sunday morning for the last 10 years.*

MCCNY's Food Pantry Hosts Important Workshop On HIV/AIDS for NYC Faith-Based Non-Profits

On May 11th, MCCNY hosted a workshop attended by 44 people representing many faith-based community organizations in NYC that serve the HIV/AIDS community. Called "Eating Good in the Neighborhood," the workshop was co-facilitated by **Ali Stafford**, MCCNY's Food Pantry Director, and Melissa Haithcox, Director for technical assistance at TA Clearinghouse and **Bailey House**. The guest speaker was Jan Zimmerman, MS, RD Program Director at Village Care of New York, who presented an educational forum on the nutritional needs of people living with HIV. MCCNY's staff prepared food so the workshop participants could eat the dishes the nutritionist discussed.

MCCNY's Food Pantry, which provides food for 5,000 men, women and children each month, including people living with HIV/AIDS, welcomes volunteers to help with its many assistance programs, ranging from daily lunches to community hot sit-down dinners. (You can sample the Food Pantry's tasty offerings at the social hour downstairs following each of MCCNY's three Sunday Worship Services: the 9am traditional Service, the 11am celebration Service, which is the most heavily attended, and the 7pm Praise & Worship Service.)

Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

Editor ..... Joe Kennedy
Graphic Design & Layout Editor ..... Les LaRue

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor. You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

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On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 109.

Disillusioned with New Pope's Ultra-Conservatism? MCCNY's 9am Sunday Service Is for You

Recent weeks have seen visitors at MCCNY who are looking for a new church. They say they are disillusioned by the anti-LGBT ultra-conservatism shown by **Pope Benedict XVI** (formerly **Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger**) in his first acts. A visitor said the new Pope's firing of Rev. Thomas Reese as editor of America magazine and promotion of anti-marriage-equality Bishop William Levada to a top position in Rome means "gays are totally unwelcome in his church and always will be, no discussion or dissent allowed – **Thank God I've found MCC!"**

To accommodate growing attendance, **MCCNY now holds three Worship Services every Sunday: 9am (traditional Service), 11am (celebration Service**, which is the most heavily attended), **and 7pm (Praise and Worship Service)**.

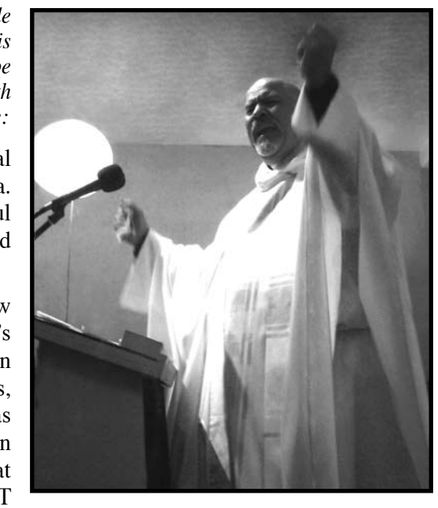
Some of the recent visitors, specifically seeking an alternative to the Roman Catholic Church because of the new Pope's anti-LGBT ultra-conservatism, have observed that ***they find MCCNY's 9am traditional Service especially appealing***, combining as it does beautiful aspects of the **Mass** with MCC's enlightened theology and preaching of the real, loving and inclusive Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Mother's Day Hymns Hail the Mother of Jesus

After the 9am traditional Service on Mother's Day (May 8th), visitors complimented MCCNY's musicians for beautiful performances of that morning's selections including Latin hymns paying tribute, appropriately for Mother's Day, to Mary, mother of Jesus. Music Director **John Fischer** sang the "Ave Maria," and MCCNY's women's quartet (**Carolyn Eufrasio, Denise Rosner, Bev** and **Alma Bostick-Heath**) did a lovely rendition of "O Sanctissima."

"One of the world's most homophobic religious leaders has been elevated to the papacy"

On April 19th, Rev. Troy Perry (pictured), Founder and Moderator of the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, issued this statement after the announcement that Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger had become Pope Benedict XVI. Leading news media, including the Religious News Service (RNS) with millions of subscribers, transmitted Rev. Troy's words around the nation and the globe:



In 1987, Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson and I met Cardinal Ratzinger at the Bilateral Dialogue held during Pope John Paul II's visit to Columbia, South Carolina. At that time, we were filled with hope that the relatively new Pope John Paul II would usher in a new era of openness for God's gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children. That did not happen.

In recent days, we held out hope that the selection of a new Pope would now bring great openness and acceptance to the Roman Catholic Church. With today's election, that did not happen. In fact, over the past three decades, Cardinal Ratzinger has served as the author of many of the Roman Catholic Church's policies that embody overt hostility to LGBT people and preclude women from full participation in the life of the Church.

We share a deep sadness that one of the world's most homophobic religious leaders has been elevated to the papacy, and regret that his policies will continue to devalue the rich spiritual gifts of LGBT people and women of faith.

My faith teaches that all people can change, so my prayers today are that the eyes of Cardinal Ratzinger—now Pope Benedict XVI—will be opened to the unique giftedness and blessing that LGBT people can be to the Church. And my prayers are with my brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church, and those whose lives will be harmed by church policies that treat LGBT people with less than unconditional acceptance and dignity.

April 9, 2005
To the Editor:

Gay City News reported reactions to the passing of Pope John Paul II and thoughts about his possible successor from several members of Dignity ("Gay Catholics Reflect on John Paul II," Apr. 7-13).

There are, however, at least two other groups of gay baptized Roman Catholics whose perspectives on these events should not go unreported. One sizable group, who are rightly outraged and disgusted by the papacy's ignorant and erroneous gay-hating bigotry, have simply walked away from organized religion and no longer attend any church. A second group—often after spending many years or decades in the first group—have come to the realization that our religion is Christianity, not a particular denomination.

We have found a spiritual home at Metropolitan Community Church, a denomination founded specifically to serve all gay Christians, including Catholics, whose original denominations tell nothing but evil lies about us. In MCC we do not depend upon the whims of a pope or cardinal for the use of worship space in "their" churches because we, empowered and liberated, own our own churches. We have our own world-class theologians and our own preachers with charisma to proclaim what God's Word really says about us—and it's all good! MCC is a faith community where one doesn't have to be an exiled dissident to practice the true, loving, inclusive Gospel of Jesus Christ.

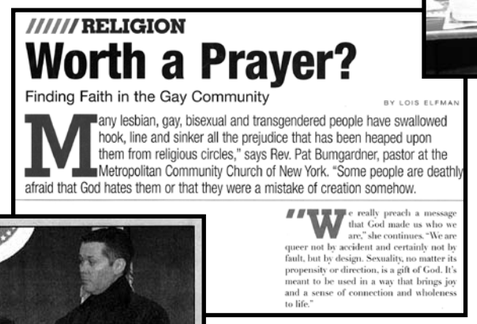
There are many baptized Catholics in MCC's congregations – including the Pastor of MCC New York, Rev. Pat Bumgardner, who graduated from a Roman Catholic seminary. Gay Christians are assured of a church where we can pray, receive God's love and hear the truth—and, as the Bible says, no one and nothing can take that away from us.

Joe Kennedy
Manhattan

A letter in **Gay City News** *(Apr. 14-20) invited all LGBT Christians, especially those baptized in the Roman Catholic Church, to make their spiritual home now at Metropolitan Community Church*

Pastor's Social Justice Activism Continues Making News

Rev. Pat Bumgardner was interviewed recently *(at right, photo by **Bill Bahlman**)* by Andy Humm and Ann Northrup on the influential **"Gay USA"** TV news program about her plans to attend the historic **World Pride** gathering in Jerusalem along with Rev. Troy Perry, and about her ongoing role as an outspoken proponent of same-sex marriage *(as seen again in the NY BLADE of March 18th below)*. Rev. Pat was also prominently quoted in the premiere issue of the new gay magazine ***Scene*** *(at right)*.



////// RELIGION

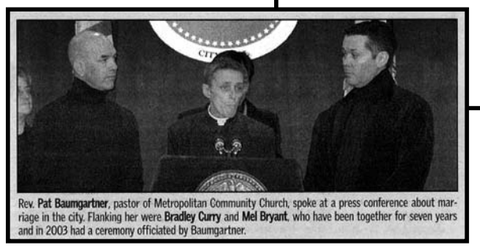
Worth a Prayer?

Finding Faith in the Gay Community

BY LOIS ELFMAN

"Many lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people have swallowed hook, line and sinker all the prejudice that has been heaped upon them from religious circles," says Rev. Pat Bumgardner, pastor at the Metropolitan Community Church of New York. "Some people are deathly afraid that God hates them or that they were a mistake of creation somehow.

"We really preach a message that God made us who we are," she continues. "We are queer not by accident and certainly not by fault, but by design. Sexuality, no matter its propensity or direction, is a gift of God. It's meant to be used in a way that brings joy and a sense of connection and wholeness to life."



Rev. **Pat Baumgartner**, pastor of Metropolitan Community Church, spoke at a press conference about marriage in the city. Flanking her were **Bradley Curry** and **Mel Bryant**, who have been together for seven years and in 2003 had a ceremony officiated by Baumgartner.

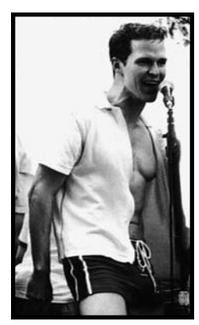
Pastor Presented with Highest Award At Night of a Thousand Gowns

Rev. Pat Bumgardner, MCCNY's Pastor, received the NYC Imperial Court's highest award, the Diamond Award, from outgoing Empress Trai La Trash at the annual Night of a Thousand Gowns extravaganza.
*(photo by **Deacon Danny Gonzalez**)*

MCCNY's Church Choir Features Many Professional Musicians and Entertainers

In recent years, the *Query* Newsletter has spotlighted more than half a dozen members of the church choir who are professional musicians and entertainers in the secular world—and that doesn't begin to scratch the surface.

In this issue we note that **Sam DuBel** *(fourth from left, back row, in sailor hat, in photo above by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)* has been featured in **HX** magazine for his role in a one-man play.



Choir member **Rick Hamilton** *(photo right)* will be going on the road again in August to play Cliff in the Kalliope Stage's production of "Cabaret" in Ohio. Last month he concluded a run there in "A Little Night Music" that left audiences and critics applauding. The *Cleveland Plain Dealer* said, "This show ranks as a miracle." The *Akron Beacon Journal* added, "The singing is fabulous." The *Sun Press* raved, "Frederick Hamilton brought fuel to the fire as Fredrik, laying bare his heart and making effective use of his body as he walked the line between love and lust," while *Scene* declared, "Frederick Hamilton (who could pass for **Val Kilmer's** second cousin) is charmingly libidinous." Bravo, MCCNY choir! Look for more profiles of our stage-starring musicians in future Newsletters.

MCCNY Music Director John Fischer sometimes arranges for unannounced special guest musicians to perform at Worship Services. Not long ago congregants at the 7pm Praise & Worship Service were treated to the well-known duo of **Jason and DiMarco** *(seen, at left, at MCC Colorado Springs last month; photo courtesy of Soulforce)*.

Stained Glass Windows Formally Dedicated

MCCNY marked the successful conclusion of its 15-month campaign to install and pay for new stained glass windows on the front of the church building facing West 36th Street with the formal dedication of the windows at the 11am Worship Service on Easter Sunday *(at right, photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)*. Windows designer/creator Jackson Hall of Ft. Lauderdale, Florida was on hand for the celebration. Thanks were voiced to all who contributed to the $80,000 fund-raising campaign for the new windows.

Lavender Light Gospel Choir Sings at Good Friday Service

MCCNY's 2-hour **Good Friday Service** (with LGBT-inclusified Stations of the Cross) drew a full house in the 250-seat sanctuary and began with a special performance by the acclaimed **Lavender Light Gospel Choir** *(photo left by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)*. **Rev. Troy Perry's** sermon focused on the faithful few who were at the Cross with Jesus to the end, including his mother Mary ("the First Disciple," Rev. Troy called her) and the Beloved Disciple. Then noted jazz singer **Ayana Lowe** *(right)* did a moving solo of the hymn "Take My Mother Home."

New Church Deacons Take Office

Lay Deacons perform an important function as part of the Pastoral Staff at MCCNY. After months of intensive training and testing ("Let them first be tested, then if they prove themselves, let them be Deacons," says I Timothy 3:10), Deacons at MCCNY are installed for renewable terms of three years. Beginning their service on Easter Sunday were Deacons **Mel Bryant, Bradley Curry, Michael Delia, Michael Gilbertson, Les LaRue, Lucky Michaels, Phillip Peres** and **Maribelle Vazquez**. They join currently serving Deacons **Danny Gonzalez-Feliciano, Noah Seaton, Sandy Hernandez, Brenton Buchannan, Jorge Blondett, Montel Cherry-Slack, Carolyn Parker, Len Richardson, Norma Sharp, Michelle Cherry-Slack, Bali White** and **Moshay Moses**. Among other duties, Deacons at MCCNY are available to pray privately with people who request it, and they serve as liturgists and Communion servers at Worship Services. They attend monthly Pastoral Staff meetings conducted by the Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life.

Palm Sunday Silent Auction Raises $2,500

*Board member **Arnold Mungioli** (on right in picture) organized the Silent Auction—the 3rd one he's run—where supporters of MCCNY's good works bid on a number of enticing items. (photo by **Valerie King**)*

Church Growth on the Agenda

Rev. Dr. Cindi Love *(photo left)*, the new Executive Director of the world-wide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, traveled from MCC denominational headquarters in Los Angeles to meet with MCCNY's Board of Directors and Capital Campaign Committee on May 12th. She presented significant proposals to promote church growth at MCCNY and throughout the denomination, and the Board is continuing serious discussions with Dr. Love to make growth a reality.

Sunday School Teacher Tim Carter Wins Emmy Award

Longtime congregant **Tim Carter** is one of the children's Sunday School teachers at MCCNY. The congregation broke into applause when Rev. Pat Bumgardner announced that he recently won an **Emmy Award**—his second!—for his work on children's TV programming at the PBS show **"Sesame Street."** Tim and his partner Andre live in Brooklyn. Tim is also known to be a talented athlete, reportedly starring on a predominantly-heterosexual volleyball team and winning the MVP (most valuable player) award on the MCCNY men's softball team *(for feats such as the jumping catch, in photo at right, to tag a runner out at home plate)*.

The Bible: It's "OUR STORY, TOO"

A Scripture-Quoting Musical by Tim Mathis Refutes Anti-Gay Myths And Reveals That LGBT People Have Been in God's Plan from the Start

"OUR STORY, TOO" is a musical play based closely on the Bible. Written and composed by musician **Tim Mathis** *(right)*, a former MCCNY **Deacon** and one-time MCCNY Food Pantry Director, it brings to life Biblical passages about LGBT people of faith and their important role in God's plan for the salvation of the world. From its opening number about the Book of Genesis, it asks and answers with wit, humor, artistic panache – and direct, indisputable quotes from Holy Scripture – frequently asked questions about what the Bible really does and doesn't say about queer folks (hint: it's all good!). One scene taken from the Hebrew Testament shows that Sodom's sin was inhospitality to visitors and failure to share its wealth with the less fortunate; it had nothing to do with "us." Another scene depicts with moving emotional intensity the intimate, repeatedly-expressed love between Jonathan and the future King David, who was Jesus' ancestor. Later scenes move into the Christian Testament, bringing alive, for instance, the household of the "sisters" Martha and Mary that Jesus visited in the Gospels.

During June Pride month, MCCNY presented encore performances of this seminal work, featuring stars of the church choir and other professional singers/actors *(photo below)*. At a time in history when the so-called Religious Right is ever more successfully infiltrating its erroneous (not to mention hateful) interpretations of the Bible into American national life, *The Query* hopes an artistic patron or "angel" will step forward to make sure the truth – as told so well in "OUR STORY, TOO" – gets the kind of wider exposure it needs. Videos of the June performances are available to interested parties through the church office.

Choir member Rick Hamilton (above) performed this summer in Terrence McNally's "It's Only a Play" at the Midtown International Theater Festival.

- *HOMECOMING SUNDAY September 18th: Pg. 1*
- *NY Times Spotlights Church's Homeless Youth Shelter: Centerfold*

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Fall 2005

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

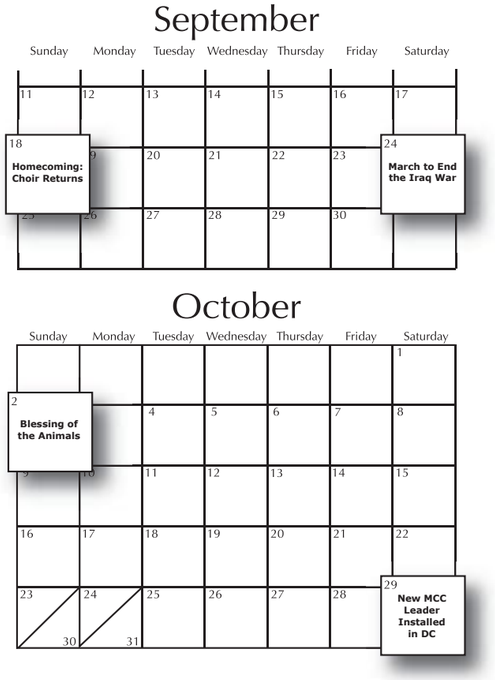
NY Times Spotlights MCCNY's Shelter for Homeless LGBTQ Youths *(see centerfold)*

Homecoming Sunday Kicks Off a Busy Season

HOMECOMING: Sunday September 18th

9 a.m., 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Services at Metropolitan Community Church of New York, 446 W. 36th St., NYC

Homecoming is always one of the most popular and memorable Sundays of the year. MCCNY's acclaimed 30-voice Choir under the direction of John Fischer returns from summer vacation with a special performance. The church's many diverse ministries and the Religious Education department welcome newcomers and returning members for a new year of programming. And after each of the three Worship Services, the Food Panty crew directed by Ali Stafford serves a hot buffet in the social hall. All in all, not to be missed.



March on Washington To End the Iraq War:

Saturday September 24th

People from MCCNY's Social Justice ministry will join a march on Washington organized by United for Peace and Justice. (For details call 212 868-5545 or visit www.unitedforpeace.org).

The last time MCCNYers traveled en masse to the capital was for the 2000 Millennium March for LGBT Rights. Congregant Bill Vila (photo at left), musician and bus driver, transported congregants to the march on his bus (right photo).
(Photos by former Board member Bob Wolff).

Blessing of the Animals (Feast of St. Francis): Sunday October 2nd

9 a.m., 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. Services at MCCNY

Observing the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi (who had a special bond with God's creatures, the animals), congregants and friends are invited to come forward during Worship with their animal companions (or a picture of them if they are "behaviorally challenged") and receive a blessing from the Pastor.

Congregants and their pets (on summer vacation in Provincetown, in photo at left) who plan to participate in the annual Blessing of the Animals

Busy Season
continued on next page →

The Pastor's Homecoming Message

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

September 2005

Coming from the heart.... Matthew 18

Dear friends:

As we prepare to celebrate Homecoming Sunday once again, I am sure that what is most on many of our minds is the devastation, the thousands upon thousands of people who have no place to call home — not even the town they once lived in, let alone a house or an apartment. Many have died needlessly. Many others finally rescued, still have little more than a dry place to lie down. Many others, clinging to life, still await rescue.

We know our church in New Orleans lost everything. What we are not sure of yet is the whereabouts or wellbeing of about ten of its members. The Rev. Dexter Brecht, pastor of MCC of Greater New Orleans, is working very hard to establish a temporary office with some means of communication.

I know many of you pretty well, and so I know that you, like I, have found the scenes on television heart-wrenching, and that we all have many unanswered "why" questions. Why didn't our government send in troops immediately? Why weren't rations airlifted/food packages dropped immediately as we've seen done time after time, devastating situation after devastating situation around the globe? Why are our own citizens being referred to as "refugees"? The racial and economic/class divides are painfully obvious. Why? Why? Why? — Henri Nouwen once wrote that "why" is a question born of fear. Perhaps our greatest fear right now is that we can do nothing.

But the Gospel we will read from on Homecoming Sunday, Matthew's 18th chapter, challenges us to think again, when tempted to give in to our fears.

In the story often entitled "The Unforgiving Debtor" {verses 21-35}, the point is not so much what people sometimes fail to do for one another and the dire consequences that can have for all of us, but rather what we can always do when faced with situations of human need: come from the heart, the way God does.

We can come from the heart now in the face of overwhelming loss and need in places like Louisiana. I want you to know that Board Member Gayle Davis has already contacted the Red Cross here and outside of New York. While volunteers are not being taken at this time, we will remain in contact and stand ready to organize folks to help care for people and rebuild when we are allowed into destroyed areas. We can open our hearts and give generously to UFMCC's efforts to aid MCCers in need. All donations in our Sunday offerings marked "disaster relief" will be forwarded to headquarters for immediate disbursement. We can open our hearts to suggestions like that of Congregant Lynn Scott that we sponsor "Adopt a Family" and band together as MCCNYers to physically and spiritually support a household during the rebuilding period.... We can open our hearts and seriously and honestly look at, name and work with all our strength and good will to eliminate the messages and fears within us that have left us a nation divided by race and ethnicity and class and all kinds of things that should never have found a home inside us. We can really pray for one another as if we were family, because we are.

When we come from the heart, there's always something we can do to make the love and mercy and compassion of God real in one another's lives. That's the point of Jesus' story. It's why MCC exists. And I'm praying today that we will together celebrate that mission and purpose, as well as the home MCC offers to all of us, on Sunday, September 18th at 9am, 11am and 7pm.

With much love,

Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Pastor

Busy Season continued from page 1

Rev. Nancy Wilson's Installation as MCC Leader

Saturday Oct. 29th

2 p.m. at the National Cathedral, Washington, D.C.

All are invited to join MCCNY's delegation at the Installation of Rev. Nancy Wilson as Moderator of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. It is a tribute to how much progress LGBT people of faith have made that this ceremony is being held in the prestigious National Cathedral (Episcopalian): When Rev. Troy Perry, MCC's retiring Moderator, founded MCC 37 years ago, he was banned from the National Cathedral's pulpit because he is gay.

LAYING ON HANDS: MCC Elders, including MCC Founder Rev. Troy Perry, pray over Rev. Nancy Wilson after she was formally elected the new MCC Moderator at the denomination's General Conference in July

Pictures of Pride 2005:

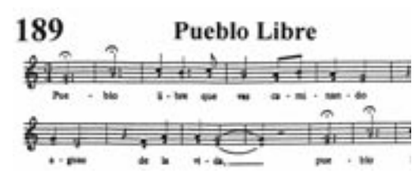
MCCNY's float and contingent in the June LGBT Pride March.
(Pride 2005 photos by Board member Gayle Davis and from other sources).

Choir member **Sam duBel** *(second singer from left on float)* starred this summer in the (personality-probing) one-man off-off-Broadway play, "The Naked Me."

Men's Group Pool Party Has a Happy Twist

Congregant **Bob Hollinger** *(at center in photo)* hosted MCCNY's men's group for its annual pool party at his Long Island home on Saturday, August 27th. There was a special reason to celebrate: As reported in July in major daily newspapers, Bob, a school teacher who had been discriminated against because he is gay, won his lawsuit against the **NYC Board of Education**. *(Photo courtesy of former Board member Steven Rodick, men's group coordinator).*

Pueblo Libre



MCCNY's Worship Services reflect and celebrate the multicultural diversity of the congregation itself. A popular hymn that sometimes concludes Worship Services is the upbeat, high-spirited Spanish song "Pueblo Libre," which prompts worshipers to clap their hands and sway their bodies as they sing. In response to requests from English-speaking congregants who are attempting to broaden their bilingual horizons, *The Query* asked a bilingual volunteer for a loose translation that captures the spirit of the hymn:

Refrain: O Free People who are walking by the waters of life, O Free People who are walking with great faith and religion.

Be very aware, be very aware of the word that gives us life. Have no fear, have no fear of the world for practicing it. (Refrain)

Be very daring, be very daring and decide to dedicate your life. Make your own decisions, make your own decisions and accept the consequences, the consequences. (Refrain)

Be very willing, be very willing to give yourself like the great Christ crucified. And be faithful to the life, be faithful to the life in front of the whole wide world, the whole wide world. (Refrain)

Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

Editor ..... **Joe Kennedy**

Graphic Design & Layout Editor ..... **Les LaRue**

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor.
You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

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Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org.

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 109.

Youthful Congregants, from Newborns to Sweet 16

The two newest members of MCCNY's congregation *(photo left)* are infant twins from Guatemala adopted by **Tim Carter** and **Andre Thompson** into their beautiful and loving new home in Flatbush, Brooklyn. Meanwhile, **Annie Bostwick-Heath**, who was welcomed into this church when she was about the age the twins are now, celebrated her Sweet 16 birthday with her lesbian moms **Alma Bostwick** and **Bev Heath** and the rest of the MCCNY family in August in the social hall after Worship Services.

(photo right, 16-year-old Annie with Rev. Pat).

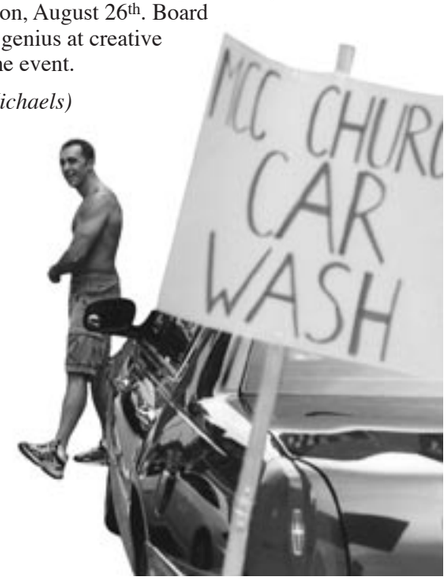
Transgender Activists Speak at MCCNY

On Sunday June 19th, **Rickke Mananzala** *(left)* and **Dean Spade** *(right)* of the **Sylvia Rivera Law Project** spoke to the congregation (totaling 350 people at the 3 Services) about the struggle for social justice being waged in the 21st century. Rickke, also a member of FIERCE, described the difficulties faced by young LGBT people in the West Village today and provided social commentary with an insight and eloquence that belied his youth. It was part of MCCNY's annual "Stonewall Sunday" celebrations, a Pride month event honoring the contributions made by transgender activists to LGBT Liberation.

Car Wash Volunteers Raise $200 for Church

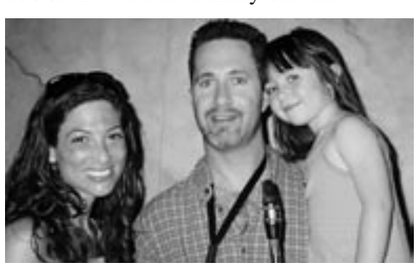
Taking advantage of MCCNY's location near the New Jersey-bound entrance to the Lincoln Tunnel, volunteers set up a Charity Car Wash for the church on Friday afternoon, August 26th. Board member Arnold Mungioli, a genius at creative "FUNdraising," organized the event.

(Photos by Deacon Lucky Michaels)



MCCNY: Open to All

Saxophonist **Chris Creviston** *(below with family)* is a straight but not narrow musician who plays in **David Raleigh's** Band at MCCNY's 11 a.m. Sunday Service.



MCCNY's Assistant Pastor Preaches At Denomination's General Conference

More than 1,500 clergy and lay people from around the world gathered in Calgary, Alberta, Canada in July for the every-other-year General Conference of the predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination.

The highlight of the week was the formal election – with 95% of the votes – of **Rev. Nancy Wilson** as the new Moderator of MCC. Rev. Wilson succeeds **Rev. Troy Perry** who retires in October. Rev. Perry founded MCC in 1968 in Los Angeles and has led the denomination through 37 years of phenomenal growth. Today there are more than 300 MCC congregations with 45,000 members in 23 countries.

Another highlight of the General Conference was the sermon preached to the assembled multitude by MCCNY's own Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, **Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales**. Following is a brief excerpt from Rev. Edgard's sermon, which was entitled "Rivers from Eden":

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And God planted a garden in Eden. A river flows out of Eden to water the garden, says the Book of Genesis, and from there it divides and becomes four branches. Not one, not two, not three, but four branches of the same river…

The yearning for a blessing was satisfied by God in many ways, including four rivers that took water from Eden and carried it to the rest of the world… Divine manifestation is always so diverse, so plural; not one way, not two ways, but many ways. And the rivers are flowing from Eden…

God is a great underground river that no one can dam up and no one can stop. These are the words pronounced by the Christian mystic Eckhart 800 years ago. Eight hundred years later, the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, and the land of my ancestors, Spain, are signs that the rivers from God keep flowing… We must confess today that [some of us] Christians prefer flood control [rather than] to let the rivers flow. Some of us want God's love restrained…

A throng of 1,500 (photo below) listened as Rev. Edgard Danielsen-Morales, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor, preached (photo above) at the MCC General Conference in Canada in July

Some of the MCCNYers at the General Conference.

(General Conference photos by Board member Gayle Davis and from other sources).

Two weeks ago Cardinal Mark Ouelle said that the Roman Catholic Church in Canada will not baptize the child of a same-sex couple if both parents insist on signing the Certificate of Baptism. History has taught us that the rivers from God could be slowed down, but no one can stop them. If the Roman Catholic Church will not baptize the children of same-sex couples, we in Metropolitan Community Churches will do it.

NYC SALUTES MCC'S RETIRING FOUNDER: Rev. Troy Perry was feted by NYC's secular LGBT community leaders in June at a pre-retirement tribute at the LGBT Community Center on West 13th Street.

NY Times Spotlights MCCNY's Shelter for Homeless LGBTQ Youths

Readers of *The Query* Newsletter with its circulation of 2,000 are familiar with the **Sylvia's Place** Shelter for homeless LGBTQ youths operated by MCCNY. On August 14th hundreds of thousands of readers of the nation's largest-circulation Sunday newspaper learned about Sylvia's Place in *The New York Times*. Excerpts from *The Times'* coverage and a follow-up letter printed the following Sunday are shown here.

A Safe Place For Beleaguered Youth

To the Editor:

In "Young, Gay, Homeless: Hard Times, Harsh Lessons" (Aug. 14), you referred to Sylvia's Place as "one of three city shelters serving this population." This may confuse some readers, since the term "city shelter" generally denotes a facility operated by the New York City Department of Homeless Services.

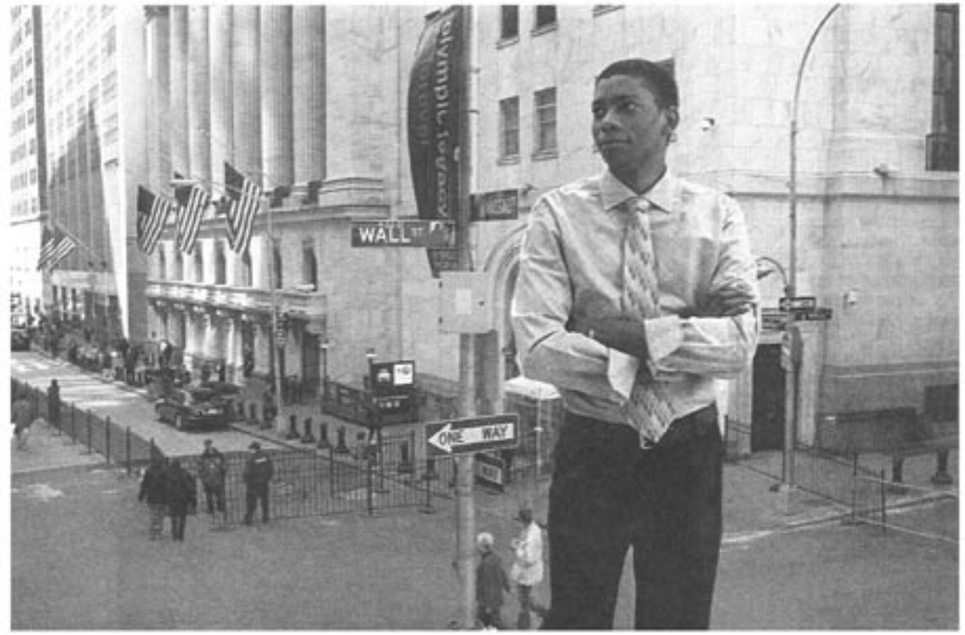
Sylvia's Place is a private, nonprofit organization affiliated with the Metropolitan Community Church of New York. The Department of Homeless Services does not operate any shelters specifically for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered people, whether youth or adults.

KATE BARNHART
Director, Sylvia's Place
Hell's Kitchen

Young, Gay, Homeless: Hard Times, Harsh Lessons

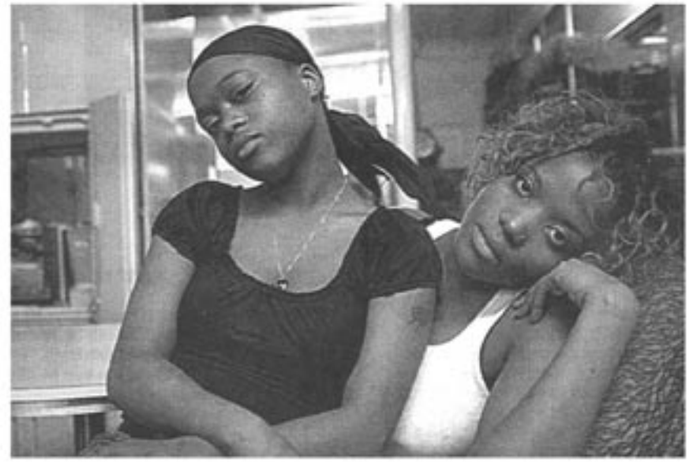
Often kicked out by their families, young people who are gay, lesbian or transsexual may end up on the street. Some 7,000 of these young people are homeless in the city on a given night, says Kate Barnhart, director of Sylvia's Place on West 36th Street, one of three city shelters serving this population. Here, some residents tell their stories.

Text and Photographs by
WILLIE DAVIS/VERAS



ANTOINE, 21
"I thought it was pretty remarkable doing an interview at an investment bank while I was homeless.
"They accepted me to become a new trainee at their bank. But most of the clientele is in the U.K., so with the time difference my shift would have started at 4 a.m. The shelter didn't open at night until 10 p.m. I was forced to call the guy at the bank and tell him that I wasn't going to be available. It was frustrating and disappointing."

REBECCA, 23



TOPAZ, 19, LEFT, WITH KAT
"I went to a foster home in Brooklyn. It was a lady. She had no kids. It was her, her mother and her dad. I had to call the cops on her several times. Like, 'Excuse me, my foster mother locked me outside.' 'Why?' 'Because I'm gay.' And when the cops would knock on the door, she'd be right there in the window. And the cops would have to be, like, boom boom boom boom. I had to leave."

DAWSON, 23

JACQUES, 23
"When you think about being gay, you don't think, 'Oh, this poor kid has been thrown out on the streets.' You think about Chelsea, a Chelsea boy, or somebody who is a drag queen and people having fun and, like, lots of sex. And you don't think, oh, this kid, his parents are kicking him out on the streets."

KIMY, 19

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, AUGUST 14, 2005

One of the Shelter youths featured, **JACQUES**, was presented with a **college scholarship** in June at the **LGBT Community Center's** annual Garden Party event held on the pier. Jacques is now attending college in Atlanta. Congratulations and continued good luck, Jacques!

LATE-BREAKING NEWS: As the Newsletter goes to press, the congregation's prayers are lifted up for the victims of the catastrophic Hurricane Katrina. Checks for urgently-needed relief efforts may be sent to MCC denominational headquarters:

Hurricane Katrina MCC Relief Fund
Metropolitan Community Churches
8704 Santa Monica Blvd., 2nd floor
West Hollywood, CA 90069

LGBT MILITARY VETERANS MARCH AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Marching up Fifth Avenue with the LGBT American Veterans for Equal Rights New York (AVERNY) contingent in New York City's Veterans Day Parade on November 11th are (left to right immediately behind the AVERNY banner) MCCNY choir member (and AVERNY officer) **Claude Ashby**, MCCNY Pastor (and AVERNY chaplain) **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and MCCNY Board member (and AVERNY vice president) **Joe Kennedy**. MCCNYer **Ray Chism** and **Tony Smith** of MCC/DC (former president of the DC chapter of AVER) also marched in the contingent. American Veterans for Equal Rights is a national organization of LGBT armed forces veterans demanding an end to the discriminatory "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy that bans LGBT people from serving in the U.S. military. Public officials marching with the AVERNY contingent included State Senator **Tom Duane** and City Councilmembers **Margarita Lopez** and **Bill Perkins**. The PBS program **"In the Life"** interviewed Rev. Pat at the parade. *(photo by Tony Breton)*

Celebrate the Holidays for real with your family of faith at MCCNY

Christmas Eve –

7 p.m. Candlelight Service, Rev. Pat Bumgardner, preaching.
Followed by Christmas Eve hot buffet in the social hall

Christmas Day –

11 a.m. Service of Lessons & Carols. Rev. Franc Perry, homilist.
Followed by Christmas Dinner in the social hall.

Kwanzaa –

Sunday, Dec. 26, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. MCCNY Board member and Assistant Treasurer Gayle Davis, Esq., of the church's Christians of African Descent ministry, will be in the pulpit.

Celebrate Christmas With Your Family of Faith At MCCNY

See the new Stained Glass Windows (pg.1)

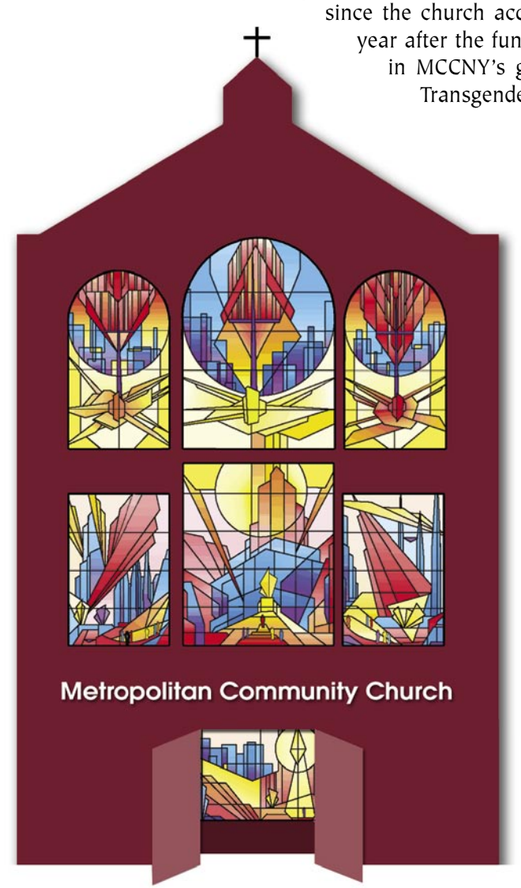
Metropolitan Community
Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

NEW STAINED GLASS WINDOWS BEING INSTALLED

They're Here and It's Happening NOW!

As the *Query* Newsletter goes to press, work is underway on the installation of the big new stained glass windows on the front of the Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) building on West 36th Street. The dedication of the beautiful new windows will take place during this Christmas Holiday Season. There will also be a "ribbon-cutting" press conference with local public officials.

The installation of the stained glass windows on the church's façade is the most significant physical upgrade to the building since the church acquired it in 1993. The completion of this ambitious project, just a year after the fund-raising drive that made it possible began, marks another milestone in MCCNY's goal of being the Spiritual Home of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) community, open to all.



Designer's sketches of windows by Jackson Hall.

Milestones:

January 6, 1972 – MCCNY holds its first Worship Service in borrowed space with the late Rev. Howard Wells as Founder.

October 31, 1993 – MCCNY and its Food Pantry acquire and move into their current home at 446 West 36th Street (a building that had been constructed as a church in 1887 but had become an aesthetically unappealing commercial structure) and begin upgrading the building.

December 10, 1995 – MCCNY becomes the only LGBT congregation in the city to own its own home as the mortgage on the 446 West 36th St. property is burned amid fanfare (including coverage on two major TV stations) thanks to the generosity of the Anonymous Donor.

June 16, 2002 – A shelter for homeless queer youths opens in the church's social hall. The shelter, now known as Sylvia's Place and operated by the church, provides shelter for no fewer than six homeless LGBTQ youths every night of the year.*

December 18, 2004 – Big new stained glass windows are installed on the front of the church facing West 36th Street.*

**Contributions to the Youth Shelter or the New Windows may be sent to: Metropolitan Community Church of New York, 446 West 36th Street, New York, NY 10018. Please be generous with your Holiday giving.*

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

Winter 2005

Pastor's Christmas Message

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Joseph, being warned in a dream, did what the Angel of God told him....
The Magi, being warned in a dream, went home another way....
Matthew 2

December 2004

Dear friends:

As I write this "Christmas" letter during the season of Advent, I am thinking of St. Matthew's story of the birth of Christ and "another way" — all the other ways we as a people, as a nation, as a world could have gone; what could have been different ... what still can be.

I'm recalling a button I saw, "Who would Jesus bomb?", and thinking: It's never too late to end a war. It's never too late to simply put our resources and our people power into helping rebuild. It's never too late to apologize — to repent — to go another way.

> *They say the good news about repentance is that it brings the past into the present instead of the other way around — the way that traps us in the past. And that gives us a chance to either let go or work things through and move on — and that is the way of hope — hope for change, hope for new life — another way.*

On Wednesday, December 8th, the masons are scheduled to begin facade work in preparation for our new stained glass windows — windows that we hope will be completed by Christmas and that will give us natural light in the sanctuary for the very first time.

Maybe you're thinking there is very little connection between that rather mundane hope for physical change and the loftier issues around us — or even the more personal, emotional issues this season can call up for many of us.

But, I am thinking: Windows that depict people of many colors, shapes and sizes coming together to offer/to channel some light sends a powerful and much needed message to the world around us:

That it's possible to go a different way.

Possible to go a different way — to all head in the same direction, to all choose the things that will bring light and clear vision to the world.... It's possible to go the way of peace on earth, good will among all, whether we're talking the courts of Boston or the streets of Baghdad.

It's possible to go another way personally and politically. And that, to me, is very good news — very much what Matthew's story of the birth of Christ is all about.

There's an ad on TV that says something about "the gift that keeps on giving." Maybe those new windows in the front of the Church are that gift — maybe each time someone sees a pane and the possibility of all God's children headed toward the light, 'silently, that wondrous gift is given.' I hope so.

May the way of Christ bring all of us home this Christmas.

With love,

Rev. Pat

January Events: Mark Your 2005 Calendars

Annual Congregational Meeting, Sunday, January 16, 2 p.m.

MCCNY's Annual Congregation Meeting will take place in the church's social hall at 2 p.m. on Sunday, January 16th. Everyone is welcome to attend, and all 411 official members of the congregation are eligible to vote at the meeting. The church's proposed budget for the year 2005 will be presented to the meeting by the Board of Directors for approval, and elections for positions on the Board of Directors will be held.

Martin Luther King's Birthday, Thursday, January 20, 7 p.m.

This year MCCNY hosts the 8th annual LGBT interfaith celebration of Rev. Dr. King's birthday, co-sponsored by NYC's three LGBT congregations: MCCNY, Unity Fellowship Church and Congregation Beth Simchat Torah.

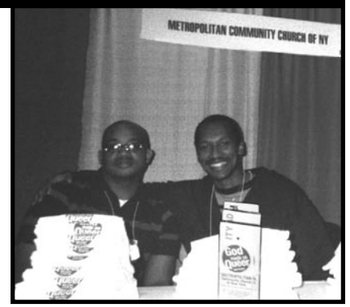
Lunar New Year, Sunday, January 30, 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

MCCNY's Asian-Pacific Islander ministry takes center stage for this celebration. There will be a special guest preacher.

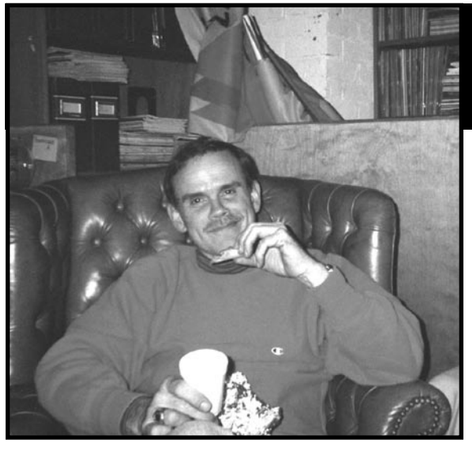
Deacon Begins Road to Ordination

MCCNY **Deacon Michelle Cherry-Slack** has successfully completed her first semester as a seminarian at Union Theological Seminary and has been officially declared a Formation student for the Ordained Ministry in the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. Deacon Michelle made news earlier in 2004 when she and her spouse, **Deacon Montel Cherry-Slack**, were married on the steps of New York City Hall by **Rev. Pat Bumgardner**. Deacon Michelle is the third lawyer from the congregation to be called to the path to ordination; **Rev. Patrick Cheng** and **Rev. Franc Perry** are also attorneys. Deacon Michelle continues to work part-time in the church office. Also joining the MCCNY office staff part-time is **Beth Kling**, a contributing writer to the Query Newsletter and the editor-in-chief of the SAGE (Seniors Active in a Gay Environment) Newsletter.

MCCNY Exhibits at LGBT Expo



MCCNY **Deacon Brenton Buchanan** (left) and volunteer **Lloyd Lee** at the church's outreach booth at the LGBT Expo at the Javits Center. Deacon Brenton coordinated the volunteers who staffed the booth for 7 hours on Saturday, November 6th and 6 hours on Sunday, November 7th. Volunteers included **Cheryl Tucker & Cheryl Bassett** and **Michael Sims**. Expo organizers said well over 10,000 people attended the event. The **"God Made Me Queer"** T-shirts that were on sale at the Expo are available in the church office for $15. They were created for MCCNY by **Mel Bryant & Bradley Curry**.



MCCNY Stalwart Sues to Stop Discrimination

Bob Hollinger's name has appeared often in the *Query* Newsletter over the years for his efforts as a stalwart volunteer at MCCNY. He has often opened his home to church ministries, including the **Men's Group** and the **40+ Group**, for social events. He is seen here in a rare moment of relaxation in the church library, where he has served as a volunteer librarian. The Query was saddened and outraged to learn recently, as the NY Blade reported, that Bob was targeted for anti-gay discrimination by the administration at the New York City public grade school where he worked as a teacher (even in this day and age, in this city, it still happens!), and we wish him well as his lawsuit to redress this grievous injustice moves forward in the courts.

Diverse Offerings from MCCNY's Education Ministry

Calendar booklets listing MCCNY's Religious Education schedule for the 2004-2005 programming year are available at the church. Besides the church's signature ***"Queering the Bible"*** course and other Bible Study classes, the offerings include various classes by well-known **career coach Ed Vladich**; **yoga** classes at the church by **Matthew Godino**; the **Artist's Way** sessions with **Ali Stafford**; a **step-by-step Recovery Program** conducted by **Rev. Paul Bradley**; a **prayer and discussion** group moderated by **Mike Gilbertson**; the weekly **Theatre of the ElephanT** with **Bill Koch**; **Gianni's** discussion group for self-identified men seeking to keep a **Positive Spirit** in the face of HIV and AIDS; teacher **Denise Janssen's Bereavement workshop**; and many more. Everyone is welcome to take advantage of these offerings.

Address at the gala by Rev. Pat Bumgardner
(*Continued from page 5)*

…On who we understand ourselves to be — on that, we must build. I'm asking you to join me in financially suppporting our vision. Give whatever you can. Maybe it's $5, maybe it's $500, maybe it's $5,000.

Metropolitan Community Church has a dream for this city, and it's about building on the conviction that every life counts. That's the message that will continue to go out loud and clear come the day when we have a new 500 seat sanctuary.

That's what we'll be feeding on, when we can turn our existing building into a social services center where — instead of the 5,486 men, women and children who received food last month — **double** that number will be fed physically and in here [touches heart], where it really counts if we really want to make a difference in this world.

…We offer shelter to children because we believe they are the Gifts of God to all of us, the people of God. Their lives count, and we want to bring out the best in them, because that's what's best for our world.

…Tonight we honor the truth of who we all are. So, whether I'm talking about raising the money to build a new church and expand a social services center, or marching for peace or doing an "illegal" wedding on the steps of City Hall, it's all about the truth that we are all the beloved Children of God. When we can learn to honor that truth in everything — when we can learn to love as God loves, without distinction, then this world will be a better place.

Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

Editor . . . . . Joe Kennedy

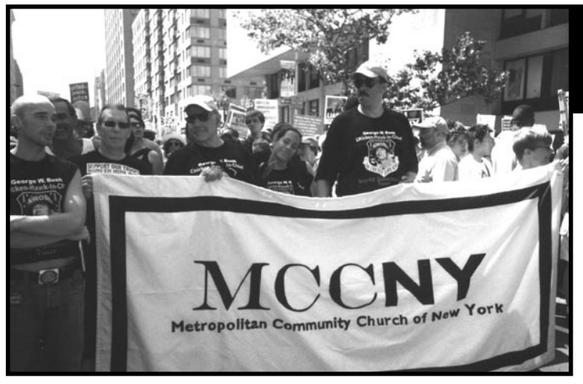
Graphic Design
& Layout Editor . . . . . Les LaRue

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor. You can read the Newsletter online at www.mccny.org, thanks to Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018.
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org.

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m.,
Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 109.

Rev. Daniel Neusom, an exceptionally gifted singer and preacher, presided at the celebration of the Sacrament of Holy Communion at MCCNY's 7 p.m. Worship Service on Sunday, Nov. 14th.



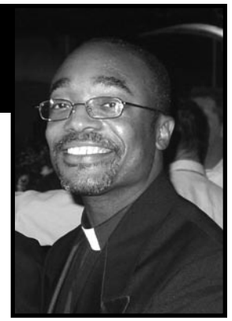
Struggle for Peace and Justice Goes On

On Sunday, Aug. 29th, dozens of members of the church's Social Justice ministry, led by **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and carrying a Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) banner, joined more than half a million other citizens in the **United for Peace and Justice** march past the site of the Republican National Convention. The commitment of MCCNY's Social Justice ministry to Peace and Justice – it's Jesus's Way! – remains firm despite adverse election results. *(photo by Bev Heath)*

MCCNYers March Against Breast Cancer

Deaconess Moshay Moses (at right in photo), facilitator of MCCNY's **GenderPeople** ministry serving the transgender community, organized the church's contingent in the annual March Against Breast Cancer recently. Among those in the MCCNY contingent were choir member and cancer survivor **Nina Schnell** (at left in photo).

Rev. Franc Perry Reaches Out To the Whole Community On Behalf of the Church



Rev. Franc Perry's ministry at MCCNY involves increased outreach to and interaction with the LGBT community beyond this immediate congregation and with the city at large. Rev. Franc's experience as a noted civic activist and lawyer give him unique qualifications for this work. Listen for an official announcement soon of the new title Rev. Franc will be assuming to reflect this focus of his ministry. Rev. Franc continues to preside at the Midweek Worship and Communion Service, Wednesdays at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. Rev. Franc's spouse is former MCCNY Board member **Jeff Bornheimer**. Their daughter is the adorable, much-beloved baby **Ruby.**

Rev. Michael Hydes Becomes Pastor of MCC Hagerstown, MD

After two years on staff at MCCNY, **Rev. Michael Hydes** has accepted a call to become Pastor of Metropolitan Community Church of Hagerstown, MD. Rev. Michael and his spouse, **Chris Baker**, were commissioned and sent forth by MCCNY's congregation on Sunday, Nov. 21st (photo above). Fittingly, it was this church's annual celebration of **Leather Sunday**. Rev. Michael and Chris have been active in NYC's leather community, and Chris is the former president of the **Metro Bears** organization. Rev. Michael has now taken up his new position at MCC Hagerstown. By means of the Internet, however, Rev. Michael continues to edit the weekly telecast of MCCNY's Worship Services (seen throughout Manhattan, Sundays from 8:30 to 9:30 a.m., on Time Warner channel 57 and RCN channel 109), and Chris remains the Webmaster for MCCNY's website (www.mccny.org), where among numerous other features, photo galleries and links, the *Query* Newsletter can be read online. *(photo courtesy of Deacon Danny Gonzalez)*

Pastor from San Juan Preaches at MCCNY

Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielson-Morales (photo at left), former Co-Pastor of ICM [ICM is MCC in Spanish] Cristo Sanador in San Juan, PR, visited this congregation several times recently and was MCCNY's Guest Preacher on the First Sunday of Advent (Nov. 28th), winning a warm response from the congregation. His sermon asked: Are you prepared this Advent to BRING God into the world (by your good and loving deeds)? When he was Pastor in San Juan, the church there grew substantially. Rev. Edgard is also a tenured Professor of Physical Sciences and an Assistant Dean at the University of Puerto Rico. *(photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)*

Extended Duty for Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini

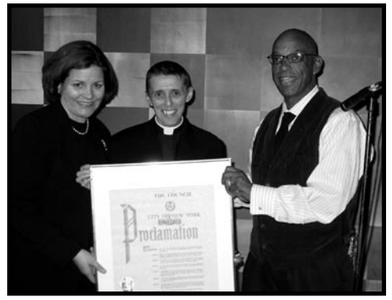
Despite the truly heartfelt and emotional "farewell" given to **Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini** by the congregation on September 19th (when the combined attendance at the 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Worship Services was well over 400) as she and her spouse, **Rev. Tawnee Walling**, moved to Maine, Rev. Kristen has not abandoned us. On the contrary, she "commutes" to MCCNY from Maine for one week a month and uses the Internet to keep in touch with congregants on a regular basis. Rev. Kristen will continue this daunting schedule until her successor as Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life assumes the full-time duties of that position in 2005. And Rev. Kristen will continue on a permanent basis to conduct the church's twice-a-year Retreats at the Incarnation Retreat Center in Ivoryton, CT. Preaching from MCCNY's pulpit on Nov. 7th to a congregation terribly shocked and dismayed by the election results, Rev. Kristen won a standing ovation and a loud chorus of "Amens" when she assured us that our standing as beloved LGBT children of God is guaranteed by God and cannot be altered or diminished by right-wing politicians or voters. *(photo by Deacon Danny Gonzalez)*

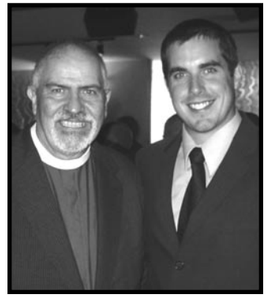
Gala at the Copa Draws Over 400

The October 4th fund-raising gala dinner-dance at the Copa drew a crowd of more than 400 well-wishers. The event was organized by MCCNY's Capital Campaign committee, co-chaired by **Mark Gilrain** and **Bob France, Esq.** It raised money and public enthusiasm for the planned expansion of the church and its major social services ministries: the **Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry** and the **Sylvia's Place Homeless LGBTQ Youth Shelter**.

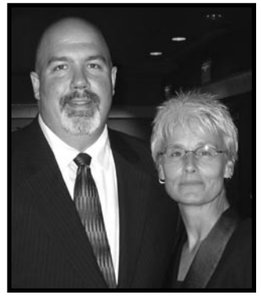
Because late-arriving contributions are still being tabulated ***(please keep those donations to the Capital Campaign coming, folks!)***, the exact figures on money raised have not yet been announced. The Silent Auction at the gala (conducted by Board member **Arnold Mungioli** and his volunteers) brought in more than $7,000.

Rev. Troy Perry, Founder and Moderator of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, spoke at the gala. Public officials who were guests of honor included New York City Councilmembers **Phil Reed** and **Christine Quinn**, New Paltz, NY Mayor **Jason West** and Asbury Park, NJ Deputy Mayor **James Bruno**. Nyack, NY Mayor **John Shields** was unable to attend because he suffered a minor heart attack earlier in the day. The entertainment was coordinated by band leader **David Raleigh**.





Photos by Deacon Danny Gonzalez



Excerpts from the address at the gala by Rev. Pat Bumgardner, MCCNY's Pastor:

Two years ago, we gathered in this place to initiate our Capital Campaign entitled "On this Rock." We took the theme from a story in the Bible… "On this rock I will build," the passage says. It's a story about people coming to understand who they really are to each other, and what that means for how we live our lives…

What matters tonight – and every night and every day of our lives — is the way we love and care for and, bottom line, treat one another.

"Love is our hope and our salvation," Bell Hooks says. The Bible I read says, God Is Love. It says that in the end, the only questions that will be asked of us are about feeding the hungry in body and spirit, and clothing the naked, and caring for the sick (Mt.25). It says that loving God is the same thing as loving one another — that's what Jesus meant when he said, "As often as you do it to the least of these, you do it to me." What really matters this night and every night is that we love one another in a way that honors that divine presence in each of us, a way that brings out the best in each other. That's the heart and soul of what this campaign "On this Rock" is all about.

…You don't have to go to Western Sudan to find the hungry or the homeless. Right over here on West 36th Street [at MCCNY's Food Pantry and Homeless Queer Youth Shelter], you'll find plenty every day, lining up for a bag lunch or some groceries or a hot meal, or the chance to sleep one night on a cot instead of a piece of cardboard, in a safe space instead of a dangerous one. Metropolitan Community Church operates New York's only emergency shelter for homeless Queer youth, in a city where estimates range from 8,000 to 30,000 children homeless.

…What's the connection between equal marriage rights and feeding the hungry or clothing the naked or sheltering homeless Queer youth? …We must not allow equal marriage rights to take a back seat to any other human rights movement today, because there is a connection: Two gay men in Florida getting to keep the children they've fostered back to life and health — when those men's own life together is honored and sanctioned, licensed and protected as it should be — will mean just a few less children unwanted, unhoused, uneducated and without hope on the street tonight. There is a connection…

And the connection is this: We are all of us the blessed and cherished Children of God, who deserve as our birthright to be treated equally, justly and with love. That's not just a sentiment but a way of life according to the Bible I've been reading.

(*Continued on page 6)*

THE MIGHTY QUINN: Rev. Pat Bumgardner congratulates Christine Quinn on her election as Speaker of the City Council (the city's second most powerful job after the Mayor) as 450 activists celebrated Quinn's victory at the LGBT Community Center on Jan. 25th. Speaker Quinn is the first out LGBT person to hold such a high office in NYC. Over the years Councilmember Quinn and Rev. Pat have participated in social justice protests together—they were jailed in the past for the "crime" of daring to set foot on Fifth Avenue as out lesbians during Manhattan's St. Patrick's Parade.
*(Picture courtesy of professional photographer **DOUG MESZLER**)*

At 3 p.m. on **Holy Saturday, April 15th**, MCCNY will hold its annual Easter Banquet in the grand refectory at Union Theological Seminary (Broadway at 121st Street). **Rev. Elder Troy Perry**, Founder and retired Moderator of the worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, will be in attendance. Tickets are $50 and are available by calling the church office (212 629-7440). There will be entertainers and presentations of awards to LGBT community leaders including **State Senator Tom Duane**. He is the prime sponsor of bills on everything from legalizing same-sex marriage to protecting all students from harassment and bullying in schools. It was a breakthrough when Tom Duane was elected to the City Council in 1991 (some 18 years after the first openly LGBT candidate, Jim Owles, ran for the seat) and again in 1998 when Tom's election to the State Senate made him the highest-ranking out LGBT person in New York history.

Holy Week at MCCNY

Wednesday, April 12th at 7pm . . . . . **Taize Service** with Rev. Edgard

Holy Thursday, April 13th at 7pm . . . . . **Footwashing Liturgy and Annointment Service**

Good Friday, April 14th at 7pm . . . . . **Stations of the Cross**
The Rev. Troy Perry, Founder of MCC, preaching • Lavender Light Gospel Choir, singing

Holy Saturday, April 15th at 3pm . . . . . **Annual Easter Banquet**
Union Theological Seminary, Refectory

Holy Saturday at 7pm . . . . . **Easter Vigil Liturgy**
The Rev. Troy Perry, preaching • Lighting of the New Fire • String and Wind Ensemble

Easter Sunday, April 16th at 9am • 11am • 7pm . . . . . **Celebration of the Resurrection**
The Rev. Troy Perry, preaching • David Raleigh and his Little/Big Band • Guest Musicians and more!

Easter Sunday Services: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 7 p.m.
Rev. Troy Perry, preaching

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Sylvia's Place Spawns a Network of Shelters Around the City for Homeless LGBTQ Youths

From the moment one longtime dream began to come true with the opening of a shelter for homeless LGBTQ youth in MCCNY's church basement almost four years ago, there has always been another, bolder dream: to reach out and enlist other churches—predominantly heterosexual churches—to provide additional emergency shelter space for use when **Sylvia's Place** at MCCNY is full to capacity, and to provide full-time facilities where—in the words of a contributor—"these young people can get on the road to self-respect, employment and independence." MCCNY's Pastor **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** enunciated the dream in stark terms to 400 people at a fund-raiser in 2002 when she declared that if every house of worship in NYC would take in as many youths each night as MCCNY did, there would be no more homeless queer kids left to sleep and suffer and perhaps die abandoned on the streets.

Thanks to the extraordinary outreach and organizational efforts of several members and friends of MCCNY, this dream too has now started to become reality. **Peggy Borgstede & Kathy Green**, MCCNY members who reside in Yonkers, and **Dr. Mina Perry** deserve credit for making it happen.

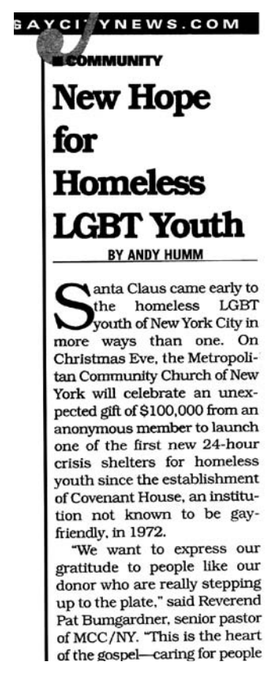
Through their hard work, the **New York Interfaith Task Force for LGBTQ Homeless Youth** was founded last September, began organizing outreach sessions and community meetings, and now has been incorporated. At press time, six churches have joined the LGBTQ Task Force, including Lutheran, Episcopal and Methodist congregations in Manhattan that accept the overflow from Sylvia's Place. And one of those six churches—St. Andrew's Episcopal in Astoria, Queens—has opened a full-time shelter where youths who have maxed out their 90-day limit at Sylvia's Place may stay for 6 to 12 months while receiving assistance in finding employment and permanent housing. **Kate Barnhart**, the Director of Sylvia's Place, is temporarily also serving as the start-up Director of the shelter in Astoria, which is called Carmen's Place.

The shelter at St. Andrew's is separate and distinct from the ongoing efforts by Sylvia's Place to find suitable space to establish its own full-time, 24/7 transitional housing facilities at an off-site location (since there is no more room in MCCNY's building).

Spring 2006

MCC NY Your Spiritual Center
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

The Query Newsletter
Metropolitan Community Church of New York
Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All



SAYCITYNEWS.COM

COMMUNITY

New Hope for Homeless LGBT Youth

BY ANDY HUMM

Santa Claus came early to the homeless LGBT youth of New York City in more ways than one. On Christmas Eve, the Metropolitan Community Church of New York will celebrate an unexpected gift of $100,000 from an anonymous member to launch one of the first new 24-hour crisis shelters for homeless youth since the establishment of Covenant House, an institution not known to be gay-friendly, in 1972.

"We want to express our gratitude to people like our donor who are really stepping up to the plate," said Reverend Pat Bumgardner, senior pastor of MCC/NY. "This is the heart of the gospel—caring for people

***PEGGY BORGSTEDE** (at right in photo) with her partner **Kathy Green** moments after Peggy addressed 450 people at the Queens LGBT Winter Pride Dinner on February 11th.*

Peggy told the event about MCCNY and Sylvia's Place and about the Interfaith Task Force for LGBTQ Homeless Youth. Her speech—following remarks to the dinner by dignitaries such as City Council Speaker Christine Quinn and State Senator Tom Duane—was warmly received by the crowd and typified the tremendous outreach effort that she and her fellow volunteers have undertaken to increase community support for homeless LGBTQ youth. *(Query photos)*

After her speech at the Queens Pride dinner, Peggy was greeted by well-wishers including **Dirk McCall** *(at left)*, president of the **Stonewall Democratic Club** of New York, who successfully lobbied the City Council to provide greatly increased funding for homeless LGBTQ youth services including a **$400,000** appropriation for the off-site expansion of Sylvia's Place.

Peggy was quoted at length in NYC's LGBT media when an anonymous private gift of **$100,000** to MCCNY and its Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services made front-page news in December *(at left, from Gay City News)*. See page 2 for more on **The Anonymous Donor**. →

The Pastor's Easter Message

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Easter 2006

"There is no need to be afraid...." Mark 16

Jesus had to rise from the dead.... John 20

Dear Friends:

The words of Mark's sixteenth chapter will be read this year as we light the new fire and join in the ancient tradition of re-telling the history of salvation, before celebrating the Resurrection on Easter Sunday with the Gospel of John, the twentieth chapter.

There is no need to be afraid.
Jesus had to rise....

I can't help thinking about all the messages that run counter to those proclamations, especially when it comes to Queer people. —The world, from the death squads of Iran to the persecutory policies of Nigeria and Uganda, to the corridors of this nation where Queer people still remain unprotected from job discrimination {ENDA has yet to pass.}, still cannot immigrate as relational partners, still can be summarily dismissed from military service {DADT remains in place.}, still must hope and pray that other human beings from health care professionals to extended family will recognize and honor our relationships and households—the world gives a very different message from that of the Gospel. Fear and the temptation to believe more in the threat of loss than the promise that we as a people not only will, but must rise up, are messages deeply ingrained and frequently reiterated in our world.

Thirty-eight years ago, God raised up a prophet to counter those death-dealing messages with a proclamation of hope and truth. The Rev. Troy Perry came preaching a simple, yet life-renewing message: God loves all people.

Today that is the message that is raising up the movement for equality and justice with defiant and defining Queer Pride movements all over Eastern Europe. It is the message breathing life into our efforts to bring MCC to Nigeria and Malaysia. It is the message behind our ministries right here at home, from expanding our services to homeless Queer youth to spurring the battle to win full equality, including marriage.

Never has there been a more critical time in history than now for that message of universal love—that message that we as a people not only can but must rise up—to prevail. No less than the coming of the Reign of God, a reign of peace and promise, a reign of hope and healing, a reign of equality and justice for all depends upon it.

There is no need to be afraid. God is with us—always has been, always will be. And that's the kind of message that can lift us all up.

I hope you will join MCCNY and your family of faith in marking Holy Week and celebrating Easter. This year we will introduce a meditative Taize service on Wednesday of Holy Week, followed by a footwashing ceremony and service of anointing on Holy Thursday. Good Friday we will welcome back into our pulpit, the Founder of Metropolitan Community Churches, The Rev. Troy D. Perry and shout for joy with The Lavender Light Gospel Choir. On Holy Saturday, you are invited to join in our Annual Awards Banquet at 3pm, where we will recognize the pioneering efforts for equality of both Senator Tom Duane and Assemblyperson Danny O'Donnell. Following the banquet, we will commemorate the ancient Easter Vigil Liturgy at 7pm. And on Easter, MCCNY will celebrate the Resurrection at 9am, 11am and 7pm with the preaching of Rev. Perry and the music of David Raleigh and the Little/Big Band.

With love,

Rev. Pat

Wave after wave of applause rolled through the full house at MCCNY'S CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE when Pastor Bumgardner announced **THE ANONYMOUS DONOR'S** holiday gift of $100,000 to the church and its **Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services** (the shelter that spawned the **NY Interfaith Task Force for LGBTQ Homeless Youth**). Few in that Christmas Eve congregation knew that The Anonymous Donor, a legendary figure often mentioned but rarely seen, was sitting incognito in their midst.

The *Query* has reported that The Anonymous Donor contributed with "such generosity over the decades" to everything from MCCNY's Food Pantry and Sylvia's Place to the acquisition of the church building itself—"our anonymous Angel of Mercy…made it possible for this community of faith to have its own home," wrote Rev. Pat in The *Query*.

Gay City News has reported that The Anonymous Donor has contributed notably to LGBTQ youth causes ever since he "provided the seed money" to open the **Hetrick-Martin Institute** (precursor of **Harvey Milk High School**) in 1983 and, on the other end of the age spectrum, that he gave the largest single donation received by **SAGE** (Seniors Active in a Gay Environment). In a remarkable first, *Gay City News* published a picture *(below)* of The Anonymous Donor. It was March 1, 2006 at the opening of the full-time homeless LGBT youth shelter in Queens, part of his life's dream come true. The Anonymous Donor's name was not published.

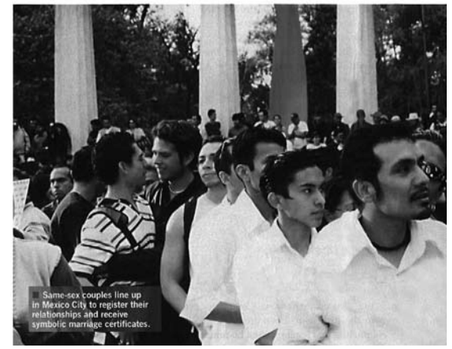
A celebration of the opening of an LGBT youth shelter at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church in Astoria included five of the women instrumental in making it happen—Peggy Borgstede, Dr. Mina Perry, Dee Johnson, Kathy Green, and Kate Barnhart—pictured here with one of the facility's donors.

GAY CITY NEWS

Valentine's Day Demands for Marriage Equality in Many Cities

An Annual Reminder and a Countdown to Something Bigger

THE ADVOCATE
REPORT



Same-sex couples line up in Mexico City to register their relationships and receive symbolic marriage certificates.

MEXICO CITY: *Throngs gather in the city's central plaza to demand same-sex marriage licenses. (photo from the Advocate newsmagazine).*

HARTFORD: *MCC clergy and lay people demonstrate at City Hall. (Associated Press photo)*

In the 1960s, a handful of activists including **Dr. Frank Kameny** and **Randy Wicker** (who eulogized **Sylvia Rivera** from MCCNY's pulpit in 2002) picketed each July 4th at Independence Hall in Philadelphia. The protests were called the **"Annual Reminder"** that LGBT citizens lacked all fundamental human rights—but historians say they were also a **"Countdown"** to the June 1969 Stonewall Riots that ignited the modern LGBT Liberation Movement. Likewise, the Valentine's Day protests every year by MCCNY and **Marriage Equality/NY** at the City Clerk's office—along with similar actions at City Halls across the United States and in Mexico City—serve as an Annual Reminder that LGBT people still lack the hundreds of legal rights and benefits that marriage confers upon heterosexuals. And these actions are also a Countdown to a much bigger event: **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** made clear that if there is no justice from New York state's highest court or the State Legislature within the next year, our community's impatience will be uncontainable and Valentine's Day 2007 will see a dramatic escalation in tactics—including civil disobedience.

NEW YORK: *Rev. Pat Bumgardner solemnized the same-sex marriage of Deacon Lucky Michaels, 26, & Billy Siegfried, 28, at the Marriage License Bureau of the City Clerk's office.*

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You can join more than 1,300 other people who receive *the QUERY Newsletter* totally FREE (and without obligation or commitment of any kind!) four times a year by clipping out this form and sending it to:

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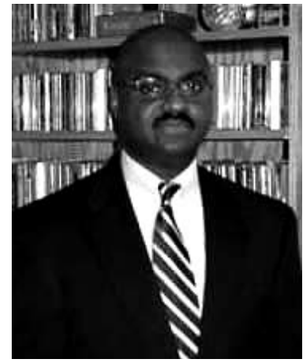
Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor.
The Query can be read online at www.mccny.org, thanks to webmaster Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018 USA
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org

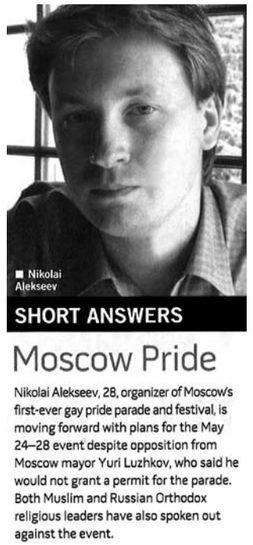
Sunday Worship Services at 9 a.m. (traditional), 11 a.m. (celebration), and 7 p.m. (praise & worship)

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 112

MCCNYer Gets Denominational Post



It's a feather in MCCNY's cap that a member of this congregation, **Marvin Bagwell** (*at right*), has been appointed to a seat on the Board of Administration (BOA) of our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. The BOA is the secular-affairs counterpart of the Board of Elders. For many years Marvin served as a Deacon at MCCNY and was especially active in his outreach to NYC's LGBT **leather community**. When former Mineshaft manager Wally Wallace died, Deacon Marvin arranged for his memorial service at MCCNY that drew an overflow crowd. Marvin, a prominent corporate attorney, graduated from Harvard College magna cum laude and from Harvard Law School.



Special Easter Collection for Eastern European LGBTs

The collapse of Communist dictatorship has not meant freedom for LGBT people in the former "Evil Empire," as Moscow activists like Nikolai Alekseev *(at left)* can attest. The governments in power continue virulent repression, but the activists will not be silenced. **Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson**, Moderator of our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, has asked that a special collection be taken up on Easter Sunday to support the social justice advocates— and establish MCC churches in Russia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Moldova. Across Eastern Europe, Rev. Wilson says, "MCC is known as 'the church that supports human rights."

Holidays and Candles

Congregants at Christmas Eve pass the flame from candle to candle before singing "Silent Night/Noche de Paz."

Newest MCC Elder Speaks on Dangers of Crystal Meth

Rev. Dr. Jim Mitulski, former Pastor of MCC San Francisco, is the newest member of the Board of Elders of our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. He is a leader in the MCC denomination's response to the crystal meth crisis in the gay community. As a Guest Preacher at MCCNY in December, he delivered an exceptionally knowledgeable sermon that touched on the appeal of the circuit party scene and the dangers posed by crystal meth.

From 1996 to 1999, **Kendall Zellner** was a member and a friendly and outgoing congregant every week at MCCNY along with his partner Don Roofener. Then they moved to Seattle *(Kendall in Seattle, at right)*. On the morning of January 3rd, Kendall passed away peacefully in his sleep as Don held his hand. Don wrote to Rev. Pat: "He always regarded your sermons as the best. You were his favorite pastor…He felt at home at MCCNY."

Deacon Michelle Hosts Weekly Youth Group Meetings;

Participants Come from Sylvia's Place Shelter and Beyond

By Kirsten Abrams

"Prodigy" is the name of MCCNY's Youth ministry, headed by Deacon and Candidate for the ordained ministry Michelle Slack. Prodigy began as a way to offer emotional and spiritual support for and guidance to the residents of Sylvia's Place, MCCNY's shelter for homeless queer-identified youth.

To draw a larger number of members, Prodigy expanded to include homeless or otherwise displaced queer youth outside of Sylvia's Place. Members of the **Y.E.S.** (Youth Empowerment Services) program at the LGBT Community Center have added to Prodigy's members, as have young adults who regularly attend Worship Services at MCCNY. Word of mouth and ads at the Center and at Hetrick-Martin have increased attendance.

A group of up to 12 members, Prodigy serves several functions at its weekly meetings (Fridays at 8 p.m. at the church). Some recent sessions focused on liturgical seasons and their significance for our community of faith; Bible studies; what MCC holds to be true about God and Scriptures, and worship. Members talk openly about their fears—of church, clergy, faith, prayer, etc.

Flexibility is a core component of the meetings, as Deacon Michelle maintains a commitment to address complex issues in the lives of the members. As they share experience from their daily lives, discussion is broadened to shed light on issues such as death, relationships and illness. Prodigy's meetings include a Lenten study group called "A Grown-Up Faith," modeled after lessons created by The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, MCC's Moderator.

Some Prodigy members participate in the music ministry at MCCNY and sing on a regular basis in the church choir.

Prodigy hopes to increase attendance at meetings. The arts play a key role in many of their lives, so there has been conversation about doing an Arts & Spirituality series. **Ray Gordon**, Artistic Director for the **Lavender Light Gospel Choir**, has agreed to do a Gospel workshop in April.

Deacon Michelle visits young people in the hospital or who are incarcerated. She is also in conversation with PFLAG-NY about developing a Speakers Bureau geared toward issues of sexuality and religion in the lives of young adults and their families.

Asked about Prodigy's goal, Deacon Michelle said, "To have a learning experience that is fun for everyone; the more they get to know one another, the more that actually happens. Many of them come into Youth Group with uncertainty and mistrust about what they're going to get, having had terribly painful experiences at other churches. So it takes time for folks to feel like they can let their guard down and truly be themselves. Many of us have waited for so long to get to do that."

NEW *QUERY* WRITER: Kirsten Abrams *(at left in photo)* & Jane Bishop became members of MCCNY within the last year and joined the church choir. The *Query* is pleased to welcome Kirsten as the newest contributing writer on our volunteer staff.

PFLAG Parents Commend MLK Interfaith Celebration

After MCCNY hosted the 9th annual LGBT Interfaith Celebration of **Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**'s Birthday in January, Rev. Pat Bumgardner received a letter from a congregant's parents who had been there: "We were greatly moved by the music, the sense of community, and the powerful oratory. Your sermon was riveting and we applaud you for your efforts."

Besides Rev. Pat, speakers included **Rev. Jeff Haskins** of Unity Fellowship Church of New York (**Archbishop Zachary Jones** of Unity Fellowship Church was also in attendance), **Rabbi Ayelet F. Cohen**, Assistant Rabbi of Congregation Beth Simchat Torah; **Rev. Gale Jones** of Renewed Life Ministries (a congregation that worships in MCCNY's sanctuary every Sunday at 3 p.m.); and **Brendan Fay** of the Lavender & Green Alliance. Music was provided by the **Lavender Light Gospel Choir** and musicians from the participating congregations. Representatives of other faiths and organizations were introduced including **Axios** (LGBT Eastern Orthodox Christians).

With a standing-room-only crowd packing the 250-seat sanctuary and a strong spirit of unity and solidarity evident, veteran observers called it the most successful LGBT Martin Luther King Celebration yet. It was organized by MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor, **Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales**.

GLSEN and MCC Team Up to End School Harassment Nationally

Denominational Headquarters Credits Rev. Pat for the Initiative

The churches of our predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination that operate in 237 cities in the USA and **GLSEN** (the Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network) have teamed up to try to end harassment and bullying of LGBT students in schools across the nation.

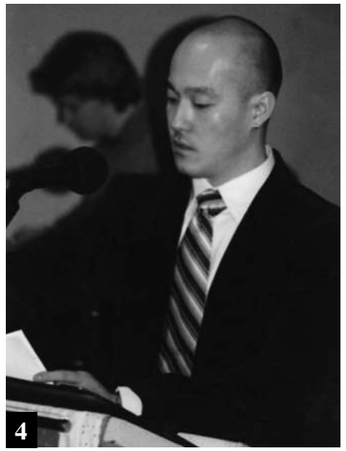
MCC and GLSEN are sponsoring "Training of Teachers" sessions for educators and community-based organizers to give them additional tools and resources to make schools safer and more affirming for LGBT children. The first session was held March 3rd at NYU with 90 registered participants. **Rev. Dr. Cindi Love**, MCC's Executive Director, pronounced it a very successful event and a model for at least seven more sessions to be held around the country over the next 18 months. Dr. Love said Rev. Pat Bumgardner was "instrumental in creating this opportunity for MCC" and GLSEN by introducing leaders of the two organizations to each other.

London Calling

Rev. Pressley Sutherland *(right)*, Pastor of MCC North London in the U.K., and his congregation undertook a ministry to provide shelter for the homeless of London this winter. This will come as no surprise to those who remember Rev. Pressley's service as Assistant Pastor of MCCNY years ago when "generosity" was his watchword.

Rev. Pressley tells The *Query* that after reading the lectionary passage on the parable of the sheep and the goats (Matthew 25:31-46) at the end of November, he challenged his congregation of about 75 people to put the lesson into action. The result was MCC North London joining with six other churches in a cold-weather coalition for the homeless. Each church is given a night of the week to provide three shifts of volunteers—evening, overnight and morning—to operate the shelter. Rev. Pressley tells The *Query* that on the first night it was his church's turn, Jan. 2nd, 17 volunteers from his congregation showed up: "Our first evening was hard work and there are particulars to iron out. But, there is nothing quite like sitting through the night silently praying and watching over a church hall full of homeless guests sleeping on air mattresses in warmth and safety. In many ways, I think our building has rarely been more of a church than on this night."

In other news from the U.K., **Rev. Kerri Messner** *(below)*, who served her Candidacy for the ordained ministry at MCCNY and was ordained here on Pentecost Sunday 2002, was installed as Pastor of **MCC Edinburgh** in Scotland on January 21st.

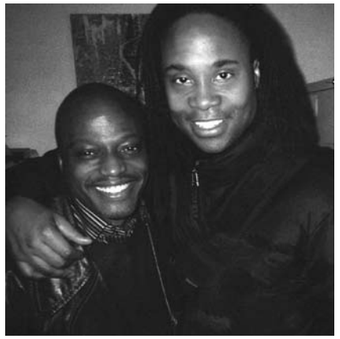


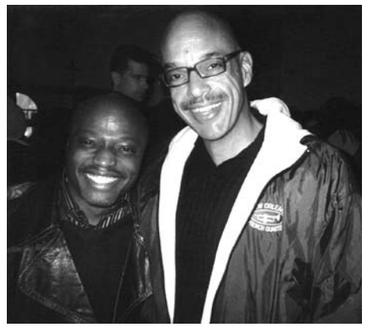
New to Our Pulpit

Boon Lin Ngeo *(left)*, seminarian at Boston's Episcopal Divinity School, preached on Jan. 29th as MCCNY's Asian-Pacific Islander ministry celebrated the Lunar New Year. His compelling exegesis on Genesis chapter 2 should forever silence those who in ignorance of the Bible's true meaning and intent say "God created Adam & Eve, not Adam & Steve."

Margret Hofmeister *(right)*, seminarian at Union Theological Seminary, made her debut on March 12th and described the greater-than-expected satisfaction she derived from working as a Habitat for Humanity volunteer building houses for the needy in West Virginia.

David Raleigh and His Famous Friends





At left: David Raleigh, band leader and pianist/vocalist at MCCNY's 11 a.m. Sunday Worship Services, is seen with superstar **Billy Porter** (whose "coming out affirmation on Logo has become a cult classic," says *Clik* magazine) after David enlisted Billy to sing as a surprise musical guest at the 11 a.m. Service recently.

At right: Only statutory term limits could drive popular former City Councilmember **Phil Reed** from office. But Phil is still an active voice and fighter for social justice in NYC—and, having been the first elected official to become a member of MCCNY, he continues to worship on Sundays at this church.

Our Newest Congregants

Tim Carter and Andre Thompson with their twins, Eli and Lucas.

Rev. Franc Perry and former MCCNY Board member Jeff Bornheimer with their children Ruby and the newly arrived Jack (David Jackson Perry).

St. Pat's for All Parade in Queens

MCCNYers line up to march in the inclusive St. Patrick's Parade in Queens on March 5th (*below right*). Mayor **Michael Bloomberg**, City Council Speaker **Christine Quinn** (the Grand Marshall), and Queens LGBT community leader **Danny Dromm** prepare to lead the parade (*below left*). The inclusive parade, organized by Brendan Fay, serves as a rebuke to Manhattan's St. Patrick's Parade whose organizers continue to spout ignorant and hateful bigotry as they ban open LGBT participation. **WBAI** radio interviewed a representative of MCCNY at the Queens parade about the church's active commitment to social justice and its shelter for homeless LGBTQ youth. *(Query photos)*

NEW "SHIMMERPLANET" CD RELEASED: MCCNY's Music Director **John Fischer** (aka Soren Anderson, whose numerous credits include singing the theme song on VH-1's "My Coolest Years") and MCCNY choir member **Carolyn Eufrasio** are also a popular secular music duo known as ***Shimmerplanet***. On May 18th they released Shimmerplanet's 2nd CD, entitled, "For the One Who Kills Tomorrow," on iTunes. The physical copy of the CD is being sold by *Shark Meat Records*. More information is available at www.Shimmerplanet.com.

Church's 3rd Floor Is Now an Art Gallery

Deacon **Bradley Curry** has transformed the 3rd floor of the church building into an art gallery. "Traffic is increasing and the general public finds the space very cool," he reports.

Currently on display is the work of 3 artists: **Tavet Gillson**, who did the cover image for the new Shimmerplanet CD; **Leah Beeferman**, who did the inside art for the CD; and photographer **Valerie A. King**, who took the picture of Shimmerplanet that appears on the front of the CD *(above right)*.

The photos by MCCNYer Valerie A. King that are on display are especially striking *(installation view at left)*. Valerie took these pictures in ***refugee camps along the Thai/Burma border***. The situation in Burma (Myanmar) is terribly grim. A military dictatorship has committed some of the worst human rights violations in the world, according to the United Nations. "Torture, starvation and malaria are the leading causes of death to these refugees," Valerie reports. All donations received during the exposition of Valerie's photography will be sent to Pippa Curwen, the Director of the Burmese Relief Centre.

Recently the gallery featured art by photographer Haywood (aka Lynn Scott), and paintings by Ed Kuklinski and Math-You Namie. Prior to that was the work of Olan, the first artist to be shown in the gallery space. In late June, there will be an exhibit featuring the art of Deacon Philip Pares and later in the year the art of Deacon Les LaRue.

All art sales from the gallery **benefit MCCNY** which gets **15%** of the sale price. Bradley advises that the gallery and the adjacent office area are also available as rental space for meetings, events, etc., and details can be obtained from him at the church office (212 629-7440).

OMISSION CORRECTED: A name was inadvertently omitted from a passage in the spring 2006 *Query* about pioneering pre-Stonewall LGBT activists. It should have read: "Barbara Gittings, Dr. Frank Kameny and Randy Wicker."

March with MCCNY's contingent in the LGBT Pride March on Sunday, June 25th.

Sunday, June 25, 2006:
March with Pride in MCCNY's Contingent
Worship with Pride: 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 7 p.m

Metropolitan Community
Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Greetings from MCCNY, Where EVERY Month Is LGBT Pride Month

Summer 2006

MCC NY Metropolitan Community Church of New York — Your Spiritual Center

The Query Newsletter

Metropolitan Community Church of New York

Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

BBC Documentary Features MCCNY

BBC documentary producers readying their equipment in the sanctuary.

MCCNY's choir rehearsing.

Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson preaching at MCCNY on May 31st. (Photos by Deacon Lucky Michaels)

A major British Broadcasting Company (BBC) television documentary that is likely to be seen by millions of viewers in a number of countries — including the United States — features Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) and its outspoken message that God loves lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people just as we are.

The BBC videotaped an Eve of **LGBT Pride Month** Worship Service at MCCNY on Wednesday, May 31st, where **Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson**, the new Moderator (leader) of our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, preached to a nearly full house. The BBC documentary, scheduled for broadcast around Easter 2007, is a 4-part report on "the lasting impact of the Reformation." It is scheduled to include a segment focusing on how modern-day Protestant Reformers – epitomized by the 38-year-old MCC denomination – are changing the views of society and people of faith regarding definitions of family, relationships and marriage.

Rev. Wilson's sermon noted that there are about 40 to 45 different kinds of family relationships described in the Holy Bible – but not one of them is the so-called "traditional" family touted by the present-day "religious right." Preaching forcefully for 20 minutes on the 3rd chapter of Mark's Gospel, Rev. Wilson proved irrefutably that "Jesus' family values were 21st century Queer family values" and concluded that "To be the Church of Jesus Christ today is to have Queer family values."

The Pastor's Pride Proclamation

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

Pride 2006

The fight for love and life *— Ruth took up that fight when she refused to cow-tow to the gender norms of her day — when, in a world dependent upon male association for survival, she pledged her love and her life to another woman, eventually bearing a child for that woman.*

David asked not that Israel remember him for all his military conquests or victories in combat, but for the love he shared with another man — "Jonathan, O Jonathan, your love to me has been wonderful, surpassing the love of women." David ordered those words inscribed in the "Book of the Just", II Samuel records, and that the entire nation should commit them to memory. Every nation needs to remember them now.

In Bucharest, in Latvia, in Sweden, in Iceland, in Lebanon where HELEM, an organization dedicated to protecting our people has taken up the fight against "curing" what God has created, nations need to remember that we, too, are God's people.

From Israel to Indiana, where a young boy fights for the right to wear a beautiful dress to his prom; from Serbia to soldiers here in our own country who are still fighting an antiquated and discriminatory code that saw an 11% rise in discharges for Queer people last year — in Canada where gay mounties are marrying and in Moscow where gay people are being jailed for laying flowers at a monument dedicated to the eradication of fascism — the fight for love and life for our people goes on across borders and boundaries of every kind.

In many places — Jamaica, Eastern Europe, Nigeria — Metropolitan Community Churches, with its simple message of inclusive love for all God's people, is not only leading the fight, but being hailed as "the human rights church." This is God's doing, as the Psalmist wrote long ago, and it is wonderful to behold. It is the continuation of the story begun long ago, when one woman dared to come out for the sake of the life and love of another. It is the continuation of the story of two men who took up the fight for all love and all life as part of God's design in this world.

This summer, I will have the blessed privilege of representing Metropolitan Community Churches in Jerusalem and Iceland at Pride events, and in Malaysia with Candidate Boon Lin Ngeo, as we seek to lay the foundation for a future MCC in that land — and everywhere I go, I will say simply, ***the fight for love and life*** *is worth it, no matter the sacrifices, no matter the costs, because WE, as a people, are worth it and the Bible from the annals of Ruth to the stories of I and II Samuel; from the tales of Ebed-melech and Jeremiah, the "unmarried" prophet, to all the nameless eunuchs of Isaiah's vision given an everlasting name — the Bible with its story of a gay man from Ethiopia who would ask the defining question of the faith then and now {What's to stop me from being included?} — the Bible is not only our story, it is our inspiration in this fight for love and life.*

I hope that you will join MCCNY on Pride Sunday as we worship at 9am, 11am and 7pm, and for Communion in the Streets at 12:30pm at the march site: 56th Street between 5th & 6th Avenues, and in marching with our float as we celebrate all the loving lives that have brought us thus far along the way, and that will lead us forward into a future of freedom and equality for all God's people.

With love,

Rev. Pat

Christians of African Descent Attend National Conference

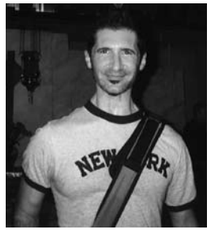
MCCNY's Christians of African Descent (CAD) ministry, chaired by **Deacon Carolyn Parker**, was well-represented at the MCC denomination's People of African Descent Conference in Tampa, FL from April 20th to 23rd. MCCNY's CAD ministry leads the congregation's annual celebration of the African-American festival of **Kwanzaa** each December 26th — Candidate for the Ordained Ministry Gayle Davis preached last year — and CAD helps prepare the special observances for the 4 Sundays in February, **Black History Month**. Preaching on the last Sunday of February this year was an MCCNY favorite, **Rev. W. Franc Perry**.

(*Photo by Candidate Gayle Davis, Esq.*)

NEW BOARD MEMBERS AND NEWLY-WEDS: Three new members were elected to MCCNY's Board of Directors at the Annual Congregational Meeting on January 22nd: **Lonnie McGowan** and **Christopher Bramfitt** (*left to right in near right photo*) and **Mark Gilrain** (*at left in wedding photo on far right*), who was married to his spouse Rob Lennon in the Brooklyn Botanical Garden by Rev. Pat Bumgardner on Saturday, May 13th. Lonnie recently undertook the successful project to repaint the entranceway, stairwell and other areas of the church building. Christopher organized this year's annual Easter Awards Banquet. Mark was a prime organizer of the big MCCNY fund-raising Galas at the Copa in 2002 and 2004. His spouse Rob is Club Secretary of **Frontrunners NY**, the LGBT runners team.

REMEMBERING DEPARTED SAGE MEMBERS: **Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales**, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, was the homilist at a Memorial Service on March 19th to remember 74 members of **SAGE** (Services and Advocacy for GLBT Elders) who have passed away in recent years. The interfaith Service was held at St. Luke-in-the-Field Episcopal Church on Hudson Street near Sylvia Rivera Way.
(Photo at left by Beth Kling/SAGE).

Rev. Edgard is also in the news because he now publishes a weekly MCCNY **E-Newsletter** distributed via e-mail.To subscribe, send a blank e-mail to: MCCNY-subscribe@yahoo.com.



Actor ***Sam DuBel*** *(right) sings in MCCNY's choir at 7 p.m. on Sundays and treated the congregation to a solo on Memorial Day weekend.*

YOUTH MINISTRIES COORDINATORS MEET: On May 6th, about half a dozen members of MCCNY (including Bev Heath, Mykal Slack, Sandra Rogers and Gayle Davis) were among the Youth Ministry Coordinators from MCC Churches in this Region who held a one-day brainstorming and exchange-of-ideas summit meeting. Further sessions are planned.

EQUALITY RIDERS WELCOMED: On April 25th, more than 100 NYC LGBT activists including MCCNYers welcomed the **Soulforce Equality Riders**. Led by Soulfource's Founder and President, **Rev. Dr. Mel White**, the Equality Riders are 33 college-age LGBTQ young adults who undertook a nationwide, news-making 7-week bus trip to confront 19 religious colleges and U.S. military academies that ban LGBT students.

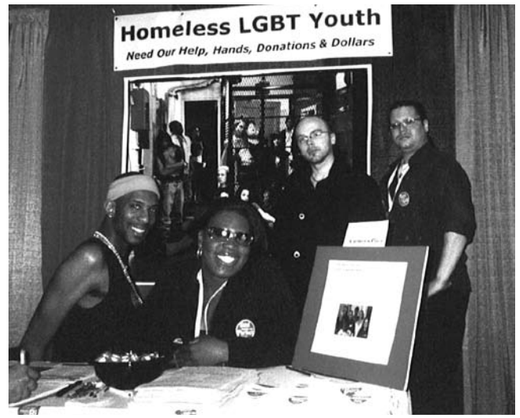
Above: Rev. Dr. Mel White (2nd from left) is welcomed by NYC supporters including MCCNY Board member Joe Kennedy (2nd from right).

At right: MCCNYers Peggy Borgstede & Kathy Green, two of the coordinators of the Greater NY Interfaith Task Force for LGBT Homeless Youth, network with a Soulforce staffer at the event.

At left: Equality Riders describe their experiences to the Query. At one college they were allowed to speak to more than a thousand students at a 45-minute assembly, but at several others they were arrested the moment they set foot on campus.

SPEAKING IN THE BIGGEST CATHEDRAL: MCCNY's **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and **Jaylin Roberson** spoke uptown on May 3rd at the **Cathedral of St. John the Divine**, the largest cathedral in the Western Hemisphere, at a forum entitled "Faith and Sexuality: Opening Our Doors to LGBT Youth," which was co-sponsored by more than a dozen organizations and congregations including MCCNY. The tall, slim **Jaylin**, 24, is a staffer at Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services. He sings in MCCNY's choir and is a former member of the **Lavender Light Gospel Choir**.

JAVITS CENTER VOLUNTEERS: On the weekend of March 25th-26th, the twice-a-year **LGBT Expo** was held at the Javits Center, attracting tens of thousands of visitors as usual. Besides MCCNY's customary booth at the Expo, for the first time there was a separate, prominently-located booth specifically for LGBT Homeless Youth Services. Sylvia's Place staffers Deacon **Lucky Michaels** and **Jaylin Roberson** were among the volunteers on duty at the booth when the *Query's* photographer happened by *(photo at right)*.



ON MCCNY'S STAFF: William Moran *(above left)* is the new full-time Director of the Sylvia Rivera Memorial Food Pantry, succeeding Ali Stafford who has moved on to work in the private sector. MCCNY's Sexton **John Garrett** *(above right)* has been faithfully cleaning the church building every week for 7 years.

RICH WALKER LEAVING PART OF HIS ESTATE TO MCCNY: Former MCCNY Board member Rich Walker and his spouse Brad Chilcoat live in San Francisco, but Rich remembers MCCNY. In a letter to the *Query* urging others to follow his example, he says: "If you have a 401K or IRA, you might want to include MCCNY as a beneficiary of those accounts. When you reach retirement age, you can begin withdrawing money from those accounts to support yourself. Any amounts left in those accounts after your death would then go to MCCNY." Concludes Rich: "You would have left a legacy to MCCNY, and your estate saves taxes by passing the principal from a tax-deferred account to a charitable organization… Saving taxes and leaving funds for MCCNY – that's a win-win situation!"

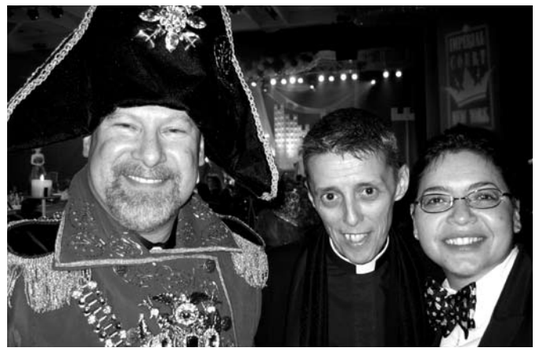
Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

Editor ..... **Joe Kennedy**
Graphic Design & Layout Editor ..... **Les LaRue**

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor.
The Query can be read online at www.mccny.org, thanks to webmaster Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York • 446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org
Sunday Worship Services at 9 a.m. (traditional),
11 a.m. (celebration), and 7 p.m. (praise & worship)
On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 112

PASTOR'S OUTREACH: In recent months Rev. Pat Bumgardner addressed an audience at the **University of New Hampshire** (thanks to arrangements made by MCCNY's Director of Retreats and former Assistant Pastor **Rev. Kristen Klein-Cecchetini**) and networked at the annual **GLAAD** Awards event *(above)* and the NYC Imperial Court's **Night of a Thousand Gowns** extravaganza *(below)*.



MCCNY Escalates Quest for Global Justice

MCCNY is well-known in NYC both for its very active social justice ministry — championing **marriage equality** and other equal rights causes for LGBT people – and for its social services ministries — the **Sylvia Rivera Memorial Food Pantry**, and the **Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services** agency that operates Sylvia's Place shelter at MCCNY and Carmen's Place shelter in Queens and that spawned the Greater New York Interfaith Task Force for LGBTQ Homeless Youth. Charity, indeed, begins at home…

…But it does not end there. Heeding the Gospel call to bring justice and liberation to "all nations," MCCNY is now taking dramatic steps to escalate its direct and tangible support for LGBT people who are oppressed in many far-flung regions of the world. (Articles by journalist Doug Ireland in *Gay City News* in recent months have made clear just how desperate the need is.)

Rev. Pat Bumgardner, MCCNY's Pastor, has been named **Chair of the Global Justice Team** of our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination.

One of the most dire situations facing the Global Justice Team is in the Caribbean island nation of **Jamaica**, widely described as the most violently LGBT-hating nation in the Western Hemisphere. Rev. Robert Griffin of MCC's Global Justice Team is traveling to Jamaica at press time (mid-June) to speak at a public forum on AIDS and the Bible and homosexuality. Rev. Pat and the Global Justice Team are supporting **Gareth**, a Jamaican LGBT activist who continues pushing the human rights struggle in that country even after his friend and roommate **Steven Harvey was murdered** in an anti-gay hate crime last December. Gareth is now the only survivor of the 3 main leaders involved in JFLAG (Jamaican Friends of Lesbians and Gays). To protect his safety, The *Query* will not publish Gareth's last name or a recent picture of him with Rev. Pat.

On Easter Sunday, MCCNYers donated $1,000 to support the work of LGBT activists across **Eastern Europe** — including **Moscow** in Russia, and in **Romania** —and to help set up MCC Churches as outposts of liberation in that region.

During the month of August, Rev. Pat will travel the globe on behalf of LGBT equal rights (while **Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales**, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor, and **Rev. Eleanor Nealy**, Director of Mental Health and Social Services at NYC's LGBT Community Center on West 13th Street, hold down the fort at MCCNY). On August 6th, Rev. Pat will be one of 3 speakers (representing Christians, alongside a Muslim and a Jewish representative) at the historic **World Pride** event in **Jerusalem**, which is sure to generate big international headlines. On August 13th, she will speak at **Iceland Pride** in Reykjavik. (Although the tiny island nation of Iceland in the North Atlantic is described as LGBT-friendly, the state-supported Evangelical Lutheran Church there, to which most Icelanders nominally belong, is most emphatically not LGBT-tolerant, and Rev. Pat has been invited specifically to address this issue).

Then after a brief return to NYC, Rev. Pat (accompanied by MCC Candidate for the Ordained Ministry **Boon Lin Ngeo**) will embark on a daring pilgrimage to **Asia** for several speaking engagements to "underground" LGBT groups in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and in Singapore. After his ordination, Boon hopes to open the first MCC church in his native Malaysia.

Rev. Pat also met in April with **Rev. Rowland (Jide) Maccaulay** (recently ordained at MCC North London in the United Kingdom, where Rev. Pressley Sutherland is Pastor), an LGBT activist from **Nigeria** — the most populous country in Africa — who courageously plans to return to his native land in July to spearhead progress and ultimately open the first MCC Church there. Rev. Maccaulay denounced the Nigerian government for recent changes in the law that he called "undisguised homophobia." Rev. Maccaulay preaches, "We are children of God who have been created to enjoy and affirm our God-given sexual nature." The Church of Nigeria (Anglican) has been at the forefront of promoting LGBT-hating prejudice in Nigeria.

WORLD-WIDE OUTREACH: A Sunday Worship Service last November at a 2-year-old MCC [it's ICM in Portuguese] Church in Sao Paulo, Brazil that receives direct monthly donations from MCCNY.

Scenes from the Easter Awards Banquet

The annual Holy Saturday afternoon luncheon — officially known as MCCNY's **Easter Awards Banquet** — has become a fond tradition for the 150 or so members and friends of the congregation who gather there with **Rev. Troy D. Perry**, the Founder of the worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, for 2 hours of socializing, awards presentations and entertainment.

Rev. Pat Bumgardner presented awards for social justice activism to New York State Assemblymember **Daniel O'Donnell** (the gay brother, it was duly noted, of celebrity/lesbian Rosie O'Donnell) and State Senator **Tom Duane** (whose award was accepted on his behalf by Senate staffer and longtime LGBT activist Allen Roskoff). Awards were presented to **Kate Barnhart**, the Director who manages Sylvia's Place and Carmen's Place homeless LGBT youth shelters (in acceptance remarks Kate quipped, "I wondered if MCC[NY] was hiring a Jew so they'd have someone to work on Christmas"), and to **Peggy Borgstede & Kathy Green**, who helped create the Greater NY Interfaith Task Force for Homeless LGBT Youth.

Karen Mason, star of the Broadway hit **Mama Mia**, brought down the house with her singing. **Eric Walton**, handsome magician/illusionist, showed why his nightclub act is so popular. Rounding out the entertainment was MCCNY's own **David Raleigh**, pianist/vocalist/band leader at the 11 a.m. Worship Service on Sundays. (MCCNY Board member **Arnold Mungioli** arranged for the entertainers and also prepared the gigantic 4-foot Easter basket, reportedly containing more than 6 pounds of chocolate candy, that was raffled off – and won by former Deacon Tim Matthis.)

Photos by Kirsten Abrams and Deacon Len Richardson

There were also "surprise" awards for a few members of the congregation: **Steven Rodick**, as he prepared to leave NYC, was thanked for his many years as Coordinator of the MCCNY Men's Group; and Deacon **Les LaRue**, for doing the layout and graphic design of the weekly Sunday bulletin, the quarterly *Query* Newsletter and special projects such as the colorful, enticing "Welcome Brochure" that was distributed to the 500 worshipers on Easter Sunday.

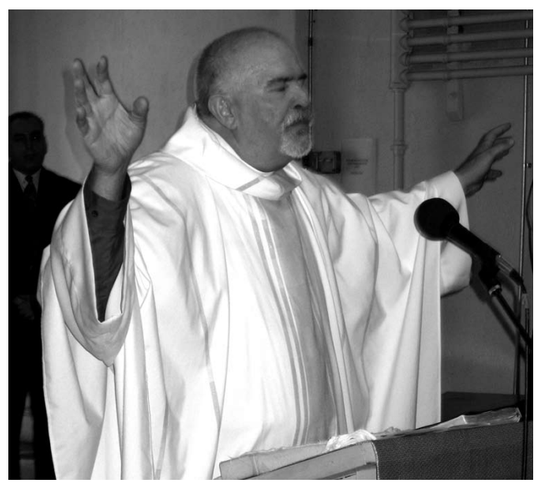
Luncheon-goers arriving

Les LaRue

Peggy Borgstede & Kathy Green

...and Easter Morn

MCCNY's 30-voice choir exulting



Rev. Troy Perry praying

People in the News

600 Join Pride Agenda in Albany

ALBANY LOBBYISTS: MCCNYers at the Empire State Pride Agenda's (ESPA) annual Lobby Day at the State Capitol on May 8th made the front page of *Gay City News*. A longtime active member of MCCNY and of Marriage Equality NY, **Cathy Marino-Thomas** organized MCCNY's bus brigade to the Millennium March on Washington for LGBT Rights in 2000. *(Photo by Doug Mezler, reprinted from Gay City News).*

MEN'S GROUP LOSES COORDINATOR TO BOSTON:

Pursuing a new career opportunity (as a design consultant at Boston Interiors), former MCCNY Board member **Steven Rodick** *(photo at left)* and his partner, musician **Wade Russo**, moved to Boston in April. Boston's gain is NYC's loss, and Steven's leadership will be sorely missed. For many years Steven has served as the Coordinator of the church's Men's Group. The Men's Group's most noticeable contribution to the whole congregation was decorating the sanctuary and the social hall for Christmas each year. Steven often helped organize MCCNY's contingent in the LGBT Pride March on the last Sunday in June, color-coordinating the marchers' clothing and the pennants they waved with the float. Under his guidance, the Men's Group's frequent social events included the famous summer softball games in Central Park, outings to pools and beaches, and dances, movie nights and pizza nights in the church social hall. The Men's Group also sponsored discussions on serious topics ranging from safe sex to self-esteem issues in the gay male community, and held retreats and other events devoted to spiritual reflection and enrichment.

AIDS WALKERS: The church's banner was carried in GMHC's annual AIDS Walk on May 14th by three present or former lay leaders in the congregation who are also LGBT community activists: **Lonnie McGowan**, **Sophia Pazos** and **Russell Murphy**.

In a recent article for journalist Karen Ocamb's series "AIDS at 25," **Rev. Troy Perry**, Founder and retired Moderator of our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, recalls an incident from the earliest days of the pandemic 25 years ago: I received a call…that Dean Sandmire, a young member of our MCC, had been admitted to Orange County General Hospital. His diagnosis was GRID, Gay-Related Immune Deficiency [as AIDS was originally called]… I'll never forget the sight as I stood outside his [hospital room] door. Warning signs were posted everywhere and I remember thinking it looked like a nuclear accident site… I ignored the signs and walked in without any special clothing…because…I knew Dean needed to see me as his pastor, not bundled and hidden and separated from him…I held him in my arms. I looked directly into his eyes… Over and over I repeated, "Dean, you are living with this, you are not dying with this."…I asked if there was anything I could do for him…He told me, "The hospital refuses to feed me…they won't bring me my food; they're leaving my meal tray out in the hall and I'm not able to get it…"…I asked to see the hospital administrator... The words tumbled out of me: "I have a church member who is so ill that he can't get out of bed, and your staff won't even take his meal tray to him!…If you want publicity, I can get it for you. If your staff doesn't immediately begin taking meal trays to my parishioner, I'll have every TV station and newspaper in Southern California down here to cover this story." …Later I returned to visit Dean…and Dean said, "I've only got one problem, Rev. Perry. Every time they come into my room now, they bring another meal tray. They won't stop feeding me!" He lived for four years. And he made those years count. And he became the first person with HIV to testify before the U.S. Congress… Among the last words he spoke before he slipped into unconsciousness were, "Be sure to tell Rev. Perry that I lived with it, I didn't die with it."

CLERGY CANDIDATE WINS SCHOLARSHIP: On May 24th, the San Francisco-based **Point Foundation**, which provides grants to students marginalized because of sexual orientation or gender identity, named MCCNYer **Mykal Slack** (formerly known as **Deacon Michelle**) as one of 30 LGBT scholars in the USA to receive multiple-year Point Foundation scholarships averaging $12,500. Mykal is a Candidate for the Ordained Ministry in our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. The Point Foundation's press release said: "Mykal…felt the homophobic sting of right wing religious rhetoric early on in a small Georgia town. After obtaining a B.A. in Economics, a law degree, and working as an attorney, Mykal entered Divinity School at Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Now, as a third-year Master of Divinity student, his primary focus is on pastoral ministry and theology, as well as liturgical studies and vocal/gospel music."

Homecoming Sunday: September 17th

- MCCNY's award-winning choir under the direction of John Fischer returns from summer vacation with an extra-special performance.
- Religious Education (Bible Study through Queer eyes, etc.) and MCCNY's myriad other ministries begin a new year of programming.
- Meet and greet friends old and new at a special social hour with hot buffet in the art gallery after each Worship Service. (It's one of the best-attended Sundays all year.)

On Homecoming Sunday (and EVERY Sunday) MCCNY holds 3 Worship Services in the church at 446 West 36th Street, NYC (between 9th and 10th Avenues):

9 a.m. Traditional	*11 a.m. Celebration*	*7 p.m. Praise & Worship*
Incorporating beautiful aspects of the Mass liturgy	The most heavily attended Worship Service (Expect virtually a full house in the 250-seat sanctuary on Homecoming)	Featuring additional music of praise (The fastest-growing Service, popular among 20- and 30-somethings)

Blessing of the Animals/ Feast of St. Francis: Sunday, October 1st

In celebration of the Feast of St. Francis of Assisi, a saint reputed to have a special love for and rapport with all of God's creatures, congregants at all 3 Worship Services are invited to step forward to the altar with their animal companions (or a picture of them if they are "behaviorally challenged" or otherwise unable to attend physically) to receive a Blessing from the Pastor.

***Deacon Mel Bryant** and "the kanine kids" anticipate the Blessing of the Animals on Sunday, Oct. 1st.*

Homecoming Sunday

September 17th • 9 a.m., 11 a.m., 7 p.m.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

INSIDE: Pastor Travels the Globe for Social Justice *See Page 2.*

FALL 2006

MCC NY Your Spiritual Center
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

The Query Newsletter

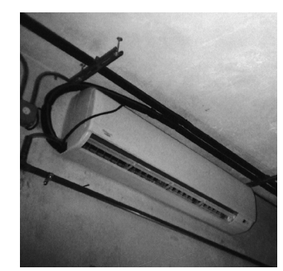
Metropolitan Community Church of New York
Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

Air Conditioning Installed in Church and Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Shelter

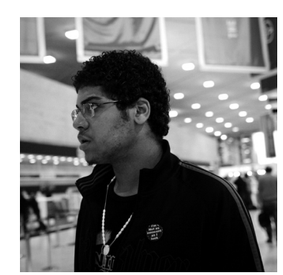
Homeless LGBTQ Youths at Sylvia's Place: They once were hot (sweltering!) but now are cool, thanks to The Anonymous Donor. *(photo by Samantha Box)*

Sylvia's Place Director Kate Barnhart *(photo by Samantha Box)*

The Anonymous Donor *(photo from Gay City News)*



One of the new air conditioning vents spewing cool air into the sanctuary *(Query staff photo)*



(photo by Samantha Box)

For New Yorkers, and indeed for people across North America and Europe, the summer of 2006 will be remembered for its heat wave – and with Global Warming underway, that trend is only likely to get worse in summers to come.

For congregants of Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) and for the homeless LGBTQ youths at the Sylvia's Place Shelter in the church, 2006 will be remembered as the summer when the dream of AIR CONDITIONING in the building became a reality, thanks to the generosity of The Anonymous Donor.

The new air conditioning system throughout the building—covering the previously-sweltering Sylvia's Place homeless LGBTQ youth shelter on the ground floor, the church sanctuary where Worship Services are held on the second floor, and the third floor offices, art gallery and library —cost $80,000 to install. The Anonymous Donor single-handedly contributed $70,000 towards that total, and other congregants stepped forward to donate the remaining $10,000.

IN APPRECIATION TO THE ANONYMOUS DONOR

The Anonymous Donor has contributed with amazing generosity over the decades, to the acquisition of the church building itself, and to MCCNY's social services ministries including the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry and the Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services. Last Christmas, he gave a $100,000 donation.

Sylvia's Place Director Kate Barnhart tells *The Query* that The Anonymous Donor established a Youth Emergency Fund of $50,000 for Sylvia's Place in June. To date, it has paid for bus tickets to reunite 6 youths with supportive relatives *(photo at right of one of them)*; shoes for youths who lacked them; a domestic partnership that allowed a young lesbian couple to get into a family shelter; college textbooks for a young person living with AIDS; a security guard license for one shelter resident and an SAT registration fee for another; and psychiatric medication to keep a young man out of the hospital until he gets Medicaid coverage.

Pastor Travels the Globe for Social Justice

In her role as the Chair of the Global Justice Team of the worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, MCCNY's Pastor Rev. Pat Bumgardner traveled the globe this summer: to World Pride in the holy city of Jerusalem during wartime, to the first-ever LGBT Pride celebration in Iceland, and to Malaysia to lay the foundations for opening the first MCC church in that officially inhospitable-to-LGBTs country. Here are brief excerpts from her keynote address at the Multifaith Convocation at Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem on August 8th:

"…If we here can overcome the religious bigotry, hatred, filth offered in the name of faith-bias and condemnation promulgated by the combined religious aristocracies of three faiths here in a city that fully one-half of the world's population claims for inspiration and guidance – if we can overcome here – if the vision of God for peace on earth and goodwill among all can even get a hearing here, then maybe there's some hope tonight…Hope for that vision peeking through for our people in Moscow, where churches advocate our public thrashing…some hope for a glimpse of goodwill and open-hearted acceptance prevailing in Iran, where girls as young as 9 and boys of 15 can be executed under religious law for sexual nonconformity…

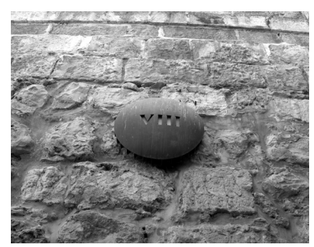
"[Let] the proclamation go out from this holy mountain…that Queer people are God's people – and that we are who we are NOT by genetic flaw and/or failed human choice, but by the grace and design of a God who knows us in our mother's wombs and named us before we were ever born – a God who made us in the divine image, and then pronounced that creation good. There are no exceptions.

"…Sometimes we hear non-Queer people say…the purpose of sexual relationships…[is to] repopulate the earth. But my Bible says – and I apologize for being so blatantly Christian, but I think you will agree it IS a tradition in need of reclaiming tonight, and I want to do that for the sake not only of Queer Christians tonight, but all those who suffer under the weight of its misrepresentation – Luke's 3rd chapter says GOD can raise up children to Abraham and Sarah from stones, and when people ask John the Baptist what they must do in the face of that truth, he says essentially: clothe the naked, feed the hungry, and treat one another decently. God does not need us to PRODUCE life – God needs us to sustain and restore life…

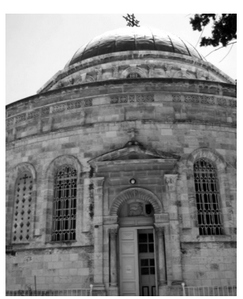
"[Religious leaders in Jersusalem], even the Ambassador from the Vatican, band together to not only condemn us but to advocate violence against us in the name of a God whose only Scriptural definition is LOVE. That act is blasphemy. It is to'ebah, an abomination, because it has nothing to do with the worship of a God who is by definition love. 'God is Love,' I John records, 'and those who abide in love abide in God, and God in them.'

"It is not our love of someone, whatever their gender identity or sexual orientation – it is not our making love that separates any one of us from God, but rather the outright failure to do so, and perhaps even more heinously, to evoke violence and hatred in that God's name. THAT is abomination!...

"Matthew writes, 'Do not be afraid… What you hear under cover of darkness, proclaim by the light of day. What you have heard whispered in the secret of your hearts, shout from the rooftops.' Everyone here knows, has heard in the secret of our hearts that voice telling us WE are God's beloved. Now it is time for the world not only to hear that message, but to know what it means…"



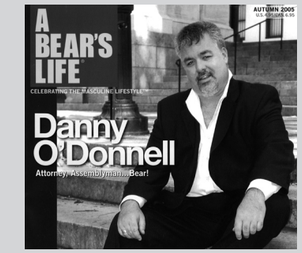
Photos of Jerusalem by Candidate Gayle Davis

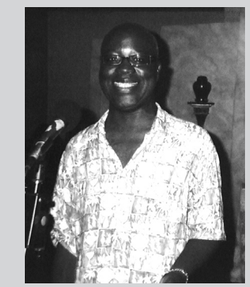


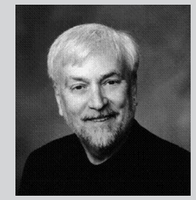
Activists Together in Love Since 1976
Rev. Earl (David) Ball & Tim Hare, celebrating their 30th anniversary this year, are seen at NYC's LGBT Pride March on June 25th and at a Margaret Cho show at the State Theater in Pennsylvania on July 7th. Rev. Earl & Tim are longtime anti-discrimination and pro-marriage equality advocates, from New York where they worship at MCCNY, to Pennsylvania where Rev. Earl serves as a Hospital Chaplain.

News Briefs:

Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, traveled to a meeting at Casa de Luz ICM [House of Light MCC] in Monterrey, Mexico early this summer to help plan for the development of new ICMs [Spanish for MCCs] in Latin America… **Mark Steiger** was congratulated upon his college graduation at a gathering of about a dozen friends from the MCCNY men's group… NY State Assemblymember **Danny O'Donnell**, guest of honor at MCCNY's Easter Awards Banquet, was cover man on, and interviewed in, *A Bear's Life* magazine *(at right)*… MCCNY Board member **Mark Gilrain** & his spouse Rob Lennon ran in the Frontrunners NY 25th annual Gay and Lesbian Pride Run in Central Park… At the Gay Games in Chicago, **Sheila Marino-Thomas's** volleyball team won a Gold Medal, and **Larry Smith** performed his personal best in swimming… Choir member **Krister Paakkonen** & his spouse **David Zwiers** were married this summer in Krister's native Sweden… On August 13th, the congregation sang "Happy Birthday" to **Annie Bostick-Heath**, who turned 17… Choir member **Eric James** continues to shine as a star athlete on NYC's LGBT tennis team, the Metropolitan Tennis Group… **Sebastian Maguire**, 29, of Queens, a leader in the church's social justice ministry, was quoted twice in recent months in *Gay City News* – the first time at the June 17th Anti-Violence Project rally protesting the brutal unprovoked gay-bashing of entertainer **Kevin Aviance** (which hit home especially hard because Kevin attended the LGBT Interfaith Celebration of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday at MCCNY last January), and the second time at the big July 7th protest in Sheridan Square after the NY Court of Appeals ruling... While MCCNY's choir was on summer vacation, some of its members including **Aaron Battle** *(at right)* continued to treat the congregation to stirring solo performances each Sunday... Queens Borough President Helen Marshall's LGBT Pride Month Celebration at Queens Borough Hall on June 28th honored former MCCNY Deacon **Russell Murphy**, a stalwart all-around LGBT activist/volunteer who has held virtually every major position in Heritage of Pride, not to mention high posts in the international coalition of Pride committees, and who donated the rainbow pride flag that flies in front of MCCNY …The August 29th issue of *the Advocate* newsmagazine contained a report on homeless LGBTQ youth in NYC that quoted several residents of Sylvia's Place and described how Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services is helping to find them jobs and permanent housing… Former MCCNY Board member **Bob Wolfe** *(at left)*, now a New Hampshire resident, did so much for the church during his long service here that it is always a joyful occasion for the congregation when he returns for a visit, as he did in late August...

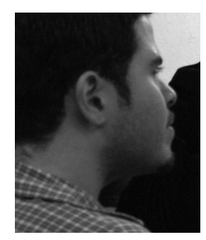






From the Mailbag

Michael of NJ writes to Rev. Pat: *"…For the longest time I considered myself 'spiritually bankrupt' because of growing up Catholic and hearing their views on who I am. I didn't go to church for over 10 years and then something pushed me to go into MCC's doors. I [was] so moved by your sermon and the love in that church, it actually brought me to tears… I finally feel in touch with God and my spirituality. Words cannot express how thankful I am to you and the members. Your church helped me find my faith again…"*



Angel wrote to an anti-LGBT preacher who "debated" Rev. Pat at a public forum at the YMCA in July about what the Bible does and doesn't say about homosexuality:
"…Your views on those in loving relationships [were] very inappropriate and distasteful. We may not agree…but we should be able to have a discussion without offending people. One example is how…you focused on the mechanics of sexuality and you spoke of 'the plumbing' of sex and how it doesn't work in homosexual sex…Our focus, as is God's focus, should be to speak about Love and not vulgarity. Love is the main message above all that is consistently repeated through the Bible… The Bible teaches us not to judge others and intentionally upset others with our words…"

Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

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Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor.
The Query can be read online at www.mccny.org, thanks to webmaster Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
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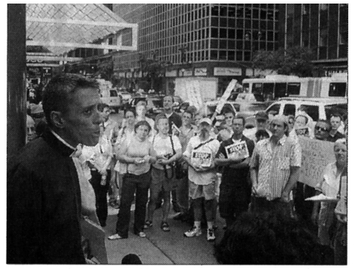
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org
Sunday Worship Services at 9 a.m. (traditional),
11 a.m. (celebration), and 7 p.m. (praise & worship)
On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30 p.m.,
Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 85

Persecution of Gays in Iran Protested

MCCNY's social justice ministry was at the forefront of recent protests, as reported in *Gay City News*:



The Reverend Pat Bumgardner of Metropolitan Community Church of New York addressed Wednesday evening's vigil.

Are "Crackdown" and "Terror" Really Different?

BY DUNCAN OSBORNE

Speaking at a July 19 vigil held to mark the one-year anniversary of the hanging of two Iranian teenage boys, Reverend Pat Bumgardner, pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of New York, a gay denomination, said, "These boys were not pedophiles. They were kids who found love... They were victims of a hate crime and of state-sanctioned murder."

'The Fight for Equality Has Just Begun'

On the evening of July 7th, Rev. Pat Bumgardner addressed a rally of thousands in Sheridan Square after 4 judges appointed by Republican George Pataki to NY State's highest court issued their ruling against same-sex marriage equality. Rev. Pat's remarks were deemed noteworthy by DemocracyNow.org, which posted the 5-minute videotape and full text online. One commentator who saw the online posting observed: "I thought the piece was so powerful on so many levels – the direct challenge to injustice, the public integration of scripture, the linkage with other social justice issues..."

Brief excerpts from Rev. Pat's speech follow: *"Today, we learned that 4 of the 6 judges believe that...the law clearly limits marriage to opposite-sex couples...that this was the universal understanding when our statutes where crafted. But it wasn't. It wasn't the universal understanding when Ruth pledged undying fidelity to another woman: 'Wherever you go, I will go. Wherever you live, I will live.'... Maybe the New York State Catholic Conference...maybe all the folks who like to cite moral authority for our exclusion from this basic human right should take note of the fact that it was two women who provided the Bible's only death-do-us-part public relational pledge....*

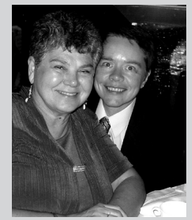
"All this decision means is that the fight for equality has just begun... Don't vote for anyone who doesn't vote for you and me... They accuse us, when we say vote only for people who support queer rights, of being single-issue voters. But I'm not a single-issue voter... They don't see the connection between queer rights and immigration rights and a just and fair wage for all of us, and child care for all the people who hold down two jobs.

"Our battles are often disparagingly compared to the civil rights movement in this country, but the only way in which the fight for queer equality on all fronts, including marriage equality, falls short of that legacy is that we have not been persistent in taking to the streets, in demonstrating and protesting. The courts, the legislature will not think we are worth saving until we show them that we think we are worth saving... [May] this defeat...become our motivation to...fight like heaven until all of our relationships are equally recognized and protected."

GenderPeople Ministry Celebrates 10th Anniversary

On Stonewall Sunday in June, the congregation extended its blessing and love to GenderPeople as the ministry, which serves the transgender community, celebrated the 10th anniversary of its founding by Rev. Pressley Sutherland. Its members over the years have included luminaries such as Saint Sylvia Rivera, whose ashes lie in a reliquary urn at the altar during Worship Services. **Deaconess Mosay Moses** *(at left)* is now the facilitator of GenderPeople.

Rev. Eleanor Nealy Promoted to Deputy Director at LGBT Center



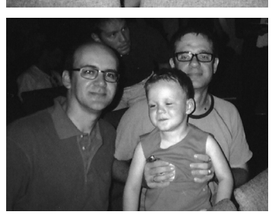
Rev. (and PhD. Candidate) Eleanor C. Nealy *(at right in photo, with her spouse Gail Drinkwater at an MCCNY fund-raising gala in 2004)* was promoted in July to the newly-created position of Deputy Director of Programs at NYC's LGBT Community Center, 208 W. 13th Street. Previously, she was Director of Mental Health and Social Services at the LGBT Center. Rev. Eleanor is a former Regional Elder (Bishop) in our worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. It is always a popular occasion when she preaches at MCCNY Worship Services, as she did several times this summer. Rev. Eleanor and Gail also recently opened a Bed & Breakfast inn in Asbury Park, NJ.

'Let the Little Children Come to Me' (Matthew 19:14)

Rev. Franc Perry—who preached impressively at MCCNY in July about God's miraculous healing power – with his spouse, former MCCNY Board member **Jeff Bornheimer**, and their son **Jack** in the Center Kids area at the LGBT Center's Garden Party on the Pier in June (while their daughter **Ruby** played nearby just beyond the camera's view). *The Query* hears that Rev. Franc, a distinguished attorney and longtime NYC civic activist, will be a candidate next year for Civil Court Judge in Manhattan; congregants are saying it's a position for which his keen sense of justice ideally suits him.

Tim Carter & Andre Thompson at church in July with their twin sons **Eli** and **Lucas**, who were making their first appearance at Worship Services. Tim, a former MCCNY Sunday School teacher, is a two-time Emmy Award winner for children's programming and is also known as a star athlete who has been named M.V.P. on the MCCNY men's group team.

Former MCCNY Board member **Dr. Andre Moreira & Jerome Dumane** attending Worship Services in August with their son **Alexandre**. By now they must be getting used to congregants exclaiming, "My goodness, look how fast he's growing!"



Jerusalem

MCC Candidate for the ordained ministry Gayle Davis, Rev. Pat Bumgardner, and former MCCNY Deacon Russell Murphy at World Pride.

Bishop Zachary Jones, Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum, Islamic author Irshad Manji, and Rev. Pat Bumgardner at the Multifaith Convocation at Hebrew Union College.

Iceland

Amidst Iceland's first LGBT Pride celebration, Rev. Pat spoke to more than 500 people in the biggest church in the country. It was front-page news in Iceland's largest daily newspaper.

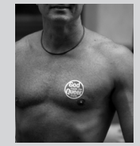
Malaysia

Rev. Pat Bumgardner preached at Worship Services at an "underground" church.

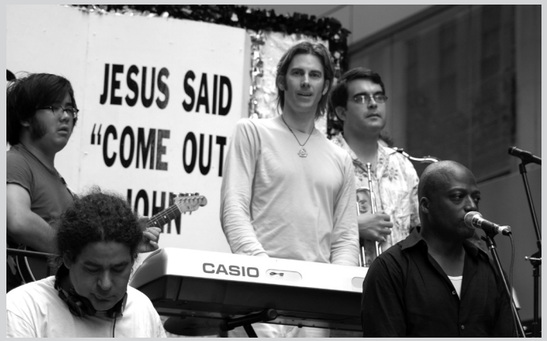
MCC Candidate for the ordained ministry Boon Lin Ngeo addresses an LGBT forum in Kuala Lumpur.

NYC Pride Month 2006

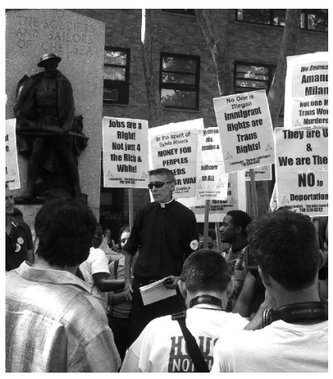
LGBT Pride March (Sunday, June 25th), celebrating the 37th anniversary of the June 1969 Stonewall Rebellion on Christopher Street that launched the modern LGBT rights movement:



MCCNY's contingent, led by actor **Sam DuBel** and friends *(at right)*, handed out tens of thousands of MCCNY's "God Made Me Queer" stickers, a now-ubiquitous part of NYC Pride.



MCCNY's float blasting live, energetic Gospel music by the church choir under the direction of **John Fischer** *(at center in photo at left)* and **David Raleigh's** *(at right in photo)* **Band**.



Trans Day of Action for Social & Economic Justice (June 23): Members of MCCNY's GenderPeople ministry and Rev. Pat Bumgardner were enthusiastic participants *(photo at left)*.

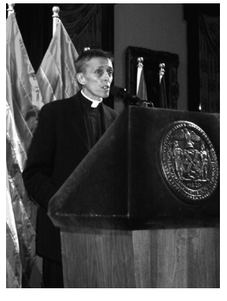
Garden Party (Mon. evening, June 19) on the Pier, benefiting the LGBT Community Center: Volunteers **Kasey Michelus** and **Sophia Pazos** *(photo at right)* staff MCCNY's outreach table at the event attended by thousands.

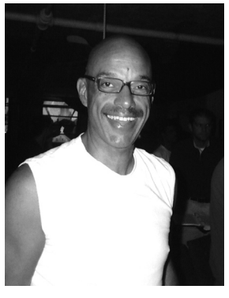
Heritage of Pride Rally (Sun., June 18th) in Bryant Park: **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** was a featured speaker *(below left)*. **Shimmerplanet**, the hit music duo composed of MCCNY Music Director **John Fischer** and choir member **Carolyn Eufrasio**, provided the music for the afternoon *(below right)*. **Gerald Tucker**, who operates the camera in church on Sundays for the cable broadcast of MCCNY's Worship Services, is also a key HOP volunteer and was at the sound control panel for the rally.

Folsom Street East Festival (June 18th): **Marvin Bagwell** *(at left in photo)*, former MCCNY Deacon and now member of the Board of Administration of our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination, with partner Alejandro Garcia.

Lavender Light Gospel Choir Salutes "Warriors of Faith" (June 17th) at Symphony Space on Broadway: ***"This is the picture of interfaith religious leaders that the world should see,"*** declared **Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum**, to cheers from the 1,000 at the Lavender Light annual Pride concert, in response to a picture atop page one of *The New York Times* that showed major Christian, Jewish and Muslim clerics in Jerusalem together to denounce LGBT people. "What brought them together is their hatred for us," Rabbi Kleinbaum said. Lavender Light honored *(from left in photo)*: **Faisal Alam**, founder of Al-Fatiha LGBTQ Muslims, Rev. Pat Bumgardner, **Elder Rev. Jacquelyn Holland** of Unity Fellowship Church/Newark, NJ, **Bishop Zachary Jones** of Unity Fellowship Church/NYC, and Rabbi Kleinbaum of Congregation Beth Simchat Torah, the world's largest LGBT synagogue. Bishop Jones, Rabbi Kleinbaum and Faisal Alam have been guests in MCCNY's pulpit on numerous occasions over the years, and the Lavender Light Black & People of All Colors Lesbian & Gay Gospel Choir, directed by **Ray Gordon**, performs twice a year in MCCNY's sanctuary. Lavender Light's ties to MCCNY, recalls Andy Buck, go back to Lavender Light's founding 21 years ago when it conducted its first rehearsals in MCCNY's space.

Speaker Christine Quinn's LGBT Pride Event (June 13th) at City Hall, marking the 20th anniversary of the historic enactment in 1986 of NYC's Gay Rights Bill, which was the culmination of 16 years of heroic all-out struggle by LGBT activists: Rev. Pat Bumgardner's call in her invocation *(below, photo by Andy Humm)* for the life-saving use of condoms was quoted in *Gay City News*. Rev. Pat, Bishop Jones and Rabbi Kleinbaum were seated front and center and were greeted by the likes of Mayor Michael Bloomberg and former Mayor Ed Koch (who signed the Gay Rights Bill into law in 1986). Honored by the overflow crowd of 600 in the City Council chambers was **former Councilmember (and MCCNYer) Phil Reed** *(below right)*. City Council Speaker Quinn's remarks to the crowd attributed Phil's "miraculous" recovery from health challenges "to God and to Rev. Pat."





Marriage Equality March Across Brooklyn Bridge (Sat., June 3rd): Clergymembers including Rev. Pat Bumgardner *(at center in photo above)* and **Rev. Gail Jones** *(at left)*, whose congregation worships as guests in MCCNY's sanctuary Sundays at 2 p.m., kick off the march with an invocation.

Hundreds of activists braved a downpour for the 3rd annual march *(at right)*. Marriage Equality provided umbrellas in the bright colors of the rainbow flag. MCCNY's "God Made Us Queer" banner was seen on national TV coverage on NBC Nightly News.

Choir Sings Thrice on Sundays

MCCNY's acclaimed choir does triple duty every Sunday, singing at each of the church's 3 Sunday Worship Services: the **9 a.m.** traditional service, the **11 a.m.** celebration service (the most heavily attended service), and the **7 p.m.** praise & worship service. *Music director John Fischer in action (above right).*

Christmas Eve:

7 p.m. Candlelight Service
Rev. Pat Bumgardner, preaching
(followed by Annual Community-wide Christmas Party!)

Christmas Day Services:

9 a.m. traditional service
11 a.m. celebration service
(followed by gala Brunch and Luncheon Feasts!)

Kwanzaa Service:

7 p.m. on Christmas night, Sunday December 25th
Lighting of the Kwanzaa Candles
(followed by gala Kwanzaa Coffee Hour!)

CHRISTMAS EVE: 7 p.m. Candlelight Service
"Come Home to YOUR Church for the Holidays"

Metropolitan Community
Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services Will Add Off-Site Transitional Housing

The shelter for homeless LGBTQ (lesbian,gay,bisexual,transgender, questioning or queer) youths at Metropolitan Community Church of New York (MCCNY) is in the process of a major expansion that will add new transitional housing facilities and other services at another location in the city while continuing the present emergency overnight shelter facilities located in the church's social hall at 446 West 36th Street.

Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services currently provides emergency shelter at the church for no fewer than six homeless LGBTQ youths every night of the year. The new full-time off-site transitional housing facilities will serve a greater number of youths—at least double the present number—and the new social services that are being added will better assist the youths to make the permanent transition from homelessness to self-sufficiency. It will also provide 24 hour a day drop-in services for young people in need of food, clothing, a shower, counseling, referrals and other assistance.

Funding for the new expanded facilities is being provided in part by the City of New York, thanks to efforts by **City Councilmember Alan Gerson** (Democrat representing Lower Manhattan) and his colleagues on the New York City Council, who have made a significant improvement in funding for homeless queer youth services. Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services has been officially recognized by the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD), making it eligible to receive additional money from the city government. The new facilities and expanded services will also require considerable additional funding from private benefactors, with whom MCCNY and Sylvia's Place are in close contact.

Watch for further announcements soon including the location of the new off-site facilities. And *please continue your prayers and generosity to make the expanded facilities operational as soon as possible*.

On Nov. 17th, 2005, the intersection of Christopher and Hudson Streets was renamed **SYLVIA RIVERA WAY** by the City of New York *(photo above, reprinted from NY BLADE 11/25/05)*. Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services and the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry at MCCNY are named in honor of the late LGBT rights activist **Sylvia Rivera**—a veteran of the June 1969 **Stonewall Riots** that began the modern LGBT Liberation movement, and a member of MCCNY who was active in **GenderPeople** and served as Director of the church's **Food Pantry** until her death in February 2002. On her deathbed, Sylvia begged **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** to try to find a way to open the shelter that has been known now for nearly 3 years as "Sylvia's Place." Among the speakers at the official street renaming ceremony were Rev. Pat and **Moshay Moses**, the facilitator of MCCNY's GenderPeople ministry and organizer of the annual **"Fashion on Gender"** fund-raising fashion show for Sylvia's Charities at MCCNY. **Saint Sylvia's** ashes are contained in a reliquary urn at the front of the sanctuary during MCCNY Worship Services.

Winter 2006

The Query Newsletter
Metropolitan Community Church of New York
Church of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People Open to All

KATE BARNHART *(photo at right)*, who became Director of Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services at MCCNY a year ago, has devoted her entire career to working with at-risk youth. From 1996 to 2001, she worked with teen felons at CASES, an alternative-to-incarceration program, where she designed and implemented an HIV peer education program and a broader health services program. She then spent three years as the first (and only) case manager at the **Neutral Zone**, a well-known drop-in center for LGBT youth in the West Village. In that capacity, she referred many youths to the Sylvia's Place shelter and became acquainted with **Rev. Michael Hydes**, who was then the Sylvia's Place Shelter Director. Kate has also been involved in social justice activism with ACT UP and other groups for the past 15 years. When Rev. Michael received the call to become Pastor at MCC Hagerstown in Maryland a year ago, Kate was the choice to take over as Director of Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services.

Kate recently told the *Query* that she enjoys the "grassroots environment" at Sylvia's Place: "I would much rather deal with the kinds of issues we face—the scrounging for resources like people, space, supplies, money—than be tied up in a huge ball of red tape" at a bigger organization. She likes the opportunity to do "hands-on counseling and cooking and all kinds of other stuff"— not just the inevitable paperwork. "It's very satisfying to be able to take a scared, cold, hungry young person and get them fed and warmed up and feeling safe. **My main regret is that we don't have the resources to be able to do that for every kid that needs us.**" Kate appealed for continued support from MCCNY's congregants and friends: Essential are volunteers, financial contributions and donated items (toiletries, new underwear, socks). *To help, call Kate at 212 629-7440 ext. 14. (Photo above by Ali Stafford)*

The Pastor's Christmas Message

Rev. Pat Bumgardner

December 2005

For unto us a child is born, whose name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Parent, Source of Peace....

Isaiah 9

Christmas 2005

Dear friends:

Isaiah's vision, what he foresaw in this prophecy from his 9th chapter, was a time when war and violence and the resulting suffering of humanity would be no more—a time when hope, not destruction, would have the last word. He said this hope, tender and genuine, would be born of a barren stump—come from nowhere—no logic to it. Isaiah believed the sign of this hope would be a new-born passion for justice and right-relationship among all God's creatures, great and small, weak and strong—and that a child, a human being would bring that passion to life.

Every year we read the prophecies of Isaiah and the birth narratives of Luke and Matthew, perhaps wondering when this dream, this vision of peace on earth, good will toward all will ever come; perhaps only half listening—mistaking the language of dreams and visions for that of fantasies and birthday candle wishes.

> *But dreams are not wishes or even the fervent pleas of a people for God to change things. In the Bible, dreams are the language of God—they are God's prayer to us—God's vision of what is possible in and through our lives.*
>
> *God is saying in this dream of Isaiah 9: I believe YOU are the hope, the promise, the peace this world so desperately needs... the world's source of peace.*

Maybe Momma once told you, you can't give what you don't have. She was right. To be a source of peace, we must have peace in our hearts, something that's very hard to do if we're cold or hungry, homeless or in some way—whether spiritually or emotionally or physically—feeling cut off from this world's many blessings. — And so, I want to give thanks this Christmas Season for YOU who have restored the possibility of peace to so many. I want to give thanks —

> *+ For Kate and Lucky, Tanino, Kate, Tony, Geoff, Michelle, Staci, Peggy, Kathy and Mina and all the people who are making a way out of no way to house kids who are homeless both at MCCNY and in the new network of churches we have formed throughout this city.*
>
> *+ For Ali and Marcus, Leon and Michael, all the volunteers for YAI, all the donors and West 36th Street neighbors, Rose, Marie and John and all who give the last word not to hunger but to hope every day in the Food Pantry.*

I want to give thanks for our anonymous Angel of Mercy. Long ago YOU took the dream of Scripture to heart and made it possible for this community of faith to have its own home. This year, once again, YOU have made it possible for Isaiah's dream to take flesh at MCCNY with the gift of $100,000 to support our ongoing works of mercy.

I want to give thanks for YOU Rev. Edgard and Bradley and Beth, for YOU Steven Rodick and your band of Merry Men, for YOU Moshay and GenderPeople; for YOU who are Deacons and Board Members, Candidates for the Ministry or Students in Formation; for YOU John Fischer, David Raleigh, Wan-Chuan Kao and all the musicians and choir members; for YOU Sophia and Maribelle, Carolyn and Boon who share the Gospel with so many varied communities each week. I want to give thanks for everyone of US at MCCNY who in some way—whether through financial contribution, prayer, volunteerism or all three—have helped make this place not only a house of prayer for all people, but a Source of Peace.

YOUR names to many have become—wonderful counselors, people of strength and conviction, everlasting and generous distributors of God's care and compassion.

May this Christmas season and its celebrations fill your hearts with some of the sense of joy, thanksgiving and peace I trust God now knows because of YOU.

With love,

Rev. Pat

Alert from the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry: There's Still Time (Barely) to Donate Children's Toys for Christmas

The deadline is Thursday, December 22nd for donating toys to the Food Pantry's annual holiday toy drive. Help make sure that every child of a Food Pantry client receives a gift they'll enjoy. The toy drive is being coordinated by Ali Stafford, Director of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry, who can be reached at the church at 212 629-7440 ext. 11.

IN APPRECIATION TO THE ANONYMOUS DONOR

During this Holiday Season, the *Query* acknowledges **The Anonymous Donor** who has contributed with such generosity over the decades to everything from the support of the Food Pantry and the acquisition of the church building to the growth of Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services.

Board Boosts Volunteerism, Seeks Recruits

MCCNY Board members spoke to the congregation *(photo at right)* in November. Excerpts from their remarks follow:

"We are members of the Board of Directors of Metropolitan Community Church of New York, and we're here to recruit new Board members. The Board needs a few people with specific secular skills—'real-world' skills. The Board is composed of volunteers who do a lot of the behind-the-scenes, hands-on work that supports and helps make possible the great spiritual mission of this church and its social services ministries and social justice activities.

"The Bible tells us in Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians [12:4-7] that God blesses each member of the church with different talents and abilities. The Bible says that even though the talents given to each person are very different and diverse, they are all good gifts from God, all to be used for God's good purposes.

"How true that is at this church! We are blessed, for instance, with so many talented musicians who share their gifts here during Worship every Sunday. [*Congregation applauds **music ministry***]. We are blessed to have in our midst talented caregivers and healers who volunteer in the church's hospital visitation ministry and in Sylvia's Place Homeless Youth Services, and other volunteers who deliver hot meals daily to homebound people living with AIDS or who assist day in and day out downstairs at the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry. [*Congregation applauds **social services ministries***]. And just as surely, there are people in this congregation who are blessed with the real-world know-how and experience or the professional contacts and connections to make a real difference by serving on the Board."

The ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING is scheduled for **Sunday, January 22, 2006, at 12:30 p.m.** in the church's social hall. Elections will be held for vacancies on the **Board of Directors** and also for **Lay Delegates**, who represent MCCNY as voting delegates at the annual Regional Conferences and the every-other-year worldwide General Conferences of our predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. MCCNY's annual operating budget for 2006 will also be adopted. Everyone is welcome to attend the Annual Congregational Meeting, and the 438 formal members of the congregation are eligible to vote.

Corrections…

Nothing mortifies the *Query's* volunteer staff more than when we err by misspelling names—especially the names of two of the longest serving and most dedicated members of the church! Hence this correction: the choir members and lesbian moms (*photo at left*) are **Alva Bostick** and **Bev Heath**.

…& Self-Congratulations

On the other hand, it's gratifying to the *Query's* volunteer staff when this Newsletter prompts mention of MCCNY in publications with much larger circulations than the *Query's* 2,000 copies. Earlier in 2005, Andy Humm in ***Gay City News*** cited "MCCNY's Query Newsletter" as the source for the scoop that Rev. Nancy Wilson would become the next MCC Moderator—our predominantly-LGBT denomination's equivalent of the Habemus Papem newsflash. More recently, the Sept. 29th issue of the weekly ***Provincetown Banner*** newspaper included this item in its News Briefs *(at right)*:

Around the Bend

... **Good publicity for Provincetown.** The front page of the fall issue of a church newsletter in New York, Metropolitan Community Church, featured a photo of two congregants and their dogs on summer vacation in Provincetown. The church's newsletter publicized their upcoming Blessing of the Animals ceremony on the Feast of St. Francis. The congregants, **Dion Brown** and **Dale Urban**

Thanksgiving Dinner for All

A Holy Cross set in the tiles of the church's entranceway greets all comers. Upstairs to the left is the sanctuary where Thanksgiving Church Services were held. To the right are the social hall and the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry where Thanksgiving Dinner was served as congregants, homeless and well-to-do, dined together.

Movie Night Every Wednesday

Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales *(at left)*, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, hosts a movie night at 7 p.m. every Wednesday, upstairs in the church's gallery. A different queer film, or film with a queer twist, is shown each week. All are welcome at this time of social recreation and fellowship. Light refreshments are served.

Credit Card Giving Makes Tithing Easy

In response to requests from congregants and other friends for an easier way to give on a regular basis, credit card giving is fully operational. Visit the church's website (www.mccny.org) to donate online, or call the church office (212 629-7440) to set up a credit card contribution. **Even if you can't make it to church every Sunday, you can support MCCNY's good work without fail by means of scheduled credit card giving.**

ASL Interpreters at 11 a.m. Service

MCCNY's 11 a.m. Worship Service on Sundays is sign language interpreted for the hearing impaired, who may use a reserved pew near the front. On a recent Sunday, ASL interpreters *(below: left to right)* **Pat Dash** and **Gene Bourquin** signed the letters "MCC" for a Newsletter photographer. Kathy Walley is one of the interns who's joined the signing team.

Coming in January: Monthly *BINGO* Nights

Like many a non-profit organization before it, MCCNY is getting on the bingo bandwagon. Monthly bingo nights will begin in January. Deacon **Bradley Curry**, an entertainment and fashion industry professional, will host the "Bingo with Bradley" games and promises a fun time along with the chance to win cash prizes. MCCNY Board member **Gayle Davis** *(photo at left)*, an attorney, secured all the necessary bingo licenses and permits from New York state and city agencies. It was a fittingly big last act for Gayle's 4 years of productive service on the Board. Now Gayle has embarked upon a new journey—as a **seminarian** at New York Theological Seminary and a Formation student for the ordained ministry in our worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. Gayle is, as it happens, the fourth lawyer in the congregation in recent years to make a mid-career switch and answer the call to the ordained ministry.

Sunday School Teacher Is Also a Singer/Soloist

Congregant **Jaylin Roberson** *(right)* has joined the staff of MCCNY's Religious Education department as the new Sunday School teacher. He conducts classes for children from 3 to 12 years of age in the upstairs gallery during the middle of the 11 a.m. Worship Service. The tall, slim Jaylin is also a gifted singer in the church choir and recently treated the congregation to a solo rendition of the popular classic hymn "All to Jesus I Surrender."

Volunteer staff of The QUERY Newsletter

Editor ..... **Joe Kennedy**

Graphic Design & Layout Editor ..... **Les LaRue**

Unless otherwise noted, Newsletter content is written by the editor.
The Query can be read online at www.mccny.org, thanks to webmaster Chris Baker.

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018 USA
Phone 212 629-7440 www.mccny.org
Sunday Worship Services at 9 a.m. (traditional),
11 a.m. (celebration), and 7 p.m. (praise & worship)

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 8:30 a.m., Time Warner channel 57, RCN ch. 109

Rev. Nancy Wilson Installed as Head of MCC Denomination

At a grand ceremony that filled Washington's prestigious National Cathedral, Rev. Nancy L. Wilson was installed as the new leader of the worldwide, predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. Rev. Wilson succeeds Rev. Troy D. Perry (who founded MCC in October 1968 and led the denomination through 37 years of phenomenal growth until his retirement in October 2005) in the job that a writer in the *NY Blade* once likened to being **"the gay pope."**

Rev. Nancy Wilson is installed as Moderator by MCC Elders including ***Rev. Troy Perry****. (Photo by Joy MCC of Orlando, FL.)*

MCCNY's Pastor ***Rev. Pat Bumgardner*** *was the* ***thurifer****—bearer of the incense-burning censer—at the front of the installation procession. (Photo by Deacon Noah Seaton.)*

MCCNYers including ***saxophonist Chris Creviston*** *(on right in front row) were among musicians from around the denomination who performed in the National Cathedral. (Photo by Joy MCC of Orlando, FL.)*

BAY AREA REPORTER

Below are excerpts from the news coverage in San Francisco's *Bay Area Reporter:*

Wilson installed as moderator of MCC
By Bob Roehr

The Metropolitan Community Churches installed the Reverend Nancy L. Wilson as moderator Saturday, October 29 in a ceremony that blended pomp with the down home feeling of community. The event drew about 1,200 people to the gothic National Cathedral, an Episcopal church, which overlooks Washington, D.C.

A censer led the processional, vigorously swinging the smoking brass pot, perfuming the path for the robed dignitaries. The afternoon sun streamed through stained glass windows to dapple the carved limestone vaults with blue, red, and yellow. The organ and choir resounded magnificently.

The Reverend Canon William Barnwell welcomed them to the cathedral saying, "It is an honor to have you in this celebration today." The cathedral has been used by many organizations and for many purposes, including the televised memorial service for former President Ronald Reagan.

Among those offering words of congratulations was Father Malcolm Boyd, wearing a rainbow stole, needing assistance walking. He called Wilson "the ideal choice to lead MCC into the future." The two had worked together on the book *Amazing Grace*.

Diverse elements of the community came to the microphone to ask Wilson if she would listen to their concerns and minister to their needs. At each point she accepted the charge and said, "I will," or "I do." Then the elders of the church gathered around her to lay their hands upon her to complete the ceremony and install her as MCC moderator.

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MCC Cautions Benedict XVI: "Be Compassionate As Your God Is Compassionate"

On November 10th, **MCC Moderator Rev. Nancy Wilson** issued a major document regarding the purge of gay seminarians by the Church of Rome. (In a cover letter, Rev. Wilson expressed "deep appreciation" to **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and Rev. Bob Goss "for their excellent ministry in the preparation of this material.") The MCC document is a lengthy pastoral letter and theological treatise entitled: "Be As Compassionate As Your God Is Compassionate—A Faithful Challenge to the Roman Catholic Church's *Instrumentum Laboris*." Brief excerpts follow:

"This is our challenge to the Roman Catholic Church: investigate your own offices, not the seminaries… The problem is the Catholic hierarchical system and its misuse of power, not gay men attempting to answer God's call to priestly ministry… MCC is a church of exiles. As many as 40% of MCC members are from a Catholic background and continue to maintain their Catholic spiritual heritage…In solidarity with our brothers and sisters in the Roman Catholic Church, and to further religious equality, MCC issues the following action points: We call upon Benedict XVI to exercise restraint and compassion in the implementation of *Instrumentum Laboris*…We invite Catholic bishops to hold up models of gay priests like Father Mychal Judge to the Catholic community…We ask Catholic bishops, priests, and laity to speak the truth. Take responsibility for institutional failures of clerical sexual abuse. Stop scapegoating gay priests for pedophilia. Homosexuality does not equate to pedophilia…We encourage all gay and bisexual Catholic priests and seminarians to stand up for Gospel principles, to follow Christ to the foot of Golgotha, and courageously come out in numbers. **It is time for a Catholic Stonewall** [emphasis added] under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to resist the Vatican culture of violence, lies, closetedness, and lack of accountability…We invite all Catholics and all people of good faith to resist the implementation of *Instrumentum Laboris* and to provide spiritual and moral support for those priests and seminarians who courageously come out. Stop financial support of an institution that purges seminaries of gay men, squandering their vocation. Give your monies directly to charities for the poor."

Refugee from Jamaica, 25, Says MCCNY "Saved My Life"— He's Now Happy, Out and Proud, With a Life Partner

In November, MCCNY's Pastor Rev. Pat Bumgardner received a letter from a 25-year-old gay man. Excerpts follow:

"… When I ran from Jamaica … to seek safe haven … from the persecution I faced as Same Gender Loving man, I had no where to turn … I [had] lived 20 years as a closeted gay man. Although I was closeted, my effeminate traits caused me a lot of persecution. I was beaten, spat upon, refused entry to public transportation, had to lie to get medical treatment, was arrested for having consensual adult homosexual contact, was threatened and ousted out of University because I refused to live a heterosexual lie. When I got [to New York] I was tired, scared and battered, but believe it or not I found MCCNY. I think it was in [a newspaper].

"Your support and constant prayers have helped me to come out of the closet and live a wonderful life as a gay man. I am happy to say I now live with my partner in life … and [am] loving it. Your kind words, example and helping hand has brought me thus far. As a Bible scholar I did not realize that Jesus and the Biblical teaching supported me and that I was not a cast-out. You made that very clear ....

"You have saved my life and inspired me to get involved in this Herculean task to get our equal rights and justice under God. You let me understand that an injustice anywhere is an injustice everywhere … I look forward to a new life with Jesus the greatest emancipator at my side …

"I thank you again for saving my life, showing me the light and allowing me to really show who I am … a Gay Black man, proud and lifted up, blessed by God, working for [God's] will and purpose in my life …"

Seminarian's "God Loves Gays" Message Gets Attention in Malaysia

MCCNY's Boon Lin Ngeo *(pictured)* is a seminarian at the Episcopal Divinity School in Boston and a Candidate for the ordained ministry in our worldwide predominantly-LGBT Metropolitan Community Churches denomination. His courageous goal is to open the first MCC church in his native Malaysia. He has recently attracted wide attention in Malaysia with the publication of his Malaysian-language book *(book cover and dedication page in photos at right)*. The English translation of the title is **"God Loves Gays."** Boon has been interviewed recently on the radio in Malaysia about the book and conducts regular God-Loves-Gays sessions in Malaysian on the Internet that have brought many contacts.

DEDICATION

To Rev. Pat Bumgardner (senior pastor at MCCNY), who witnesses and celebrates my commitment, affirms my chosen calling, believes in its beauty, its holiness and its dignity; whose faith in this book and patience with me heartened me in many a bleak hour.

To my queer siblings at Metropolitan Community Church New York (MCCNY), who have taught me the meaning of integrity, who have showed me what it means to be bold in doing justice, to be generous in loving tenderly and to be prayerful in walking humbly with God.

MCCNY Revs. Have Roles In Denominational Conferences

Women in Ministry Conference ("Peace-Building, Its Many Dimensions") – Feb. 2-6, 2006, in Sarasota, FL: Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, MCCNY's Director of Retreats and former Assistant Pastor, will lead the daily Worship Services. Carter Heywood is the featured speaker.

Men in Ministry Conference ("Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies, Healthy Spirits") – Feb. 2-4, 2006, in Atlanta, GA: Rev. Dr. Edgard Danielsen-Morales, MCCNY's full-time Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, is one of three featured speakers.

People of African Descent Conference ("Ain't No Mountain High Enough") – April 20-23, 2006, in Tampa, FL: Organizers of the conference are Rev. Franc Perry, whom the *Query* Newsletter once described as "MCCNY's favorite son," and Rev. Candy Holmes who was MCCNY's guest preacher on Martin Luther King Sunday in 2005.

From left: Rev. Kristen, Rev. Edgard, Rev. Franc and Rev. Candy

Relief for Hurricane Katrina Evacuees

MCC's "Caravan of Hope" *(at left)* delivered mattresses to evacuees after Katrina. Donations from MCCNY and other churches around the denomination helped pay for the effort.

MCCNY's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry set up a table, staffed by **Food Pantry Director Ali Stafford** *(at right)*, at the Katrina Employment Exhibition held at 1 Chase Manhattan Plaza on November 2nd. Hurricane evacuees who came to the New York area were provided with offers of food and other assistance at the table.

Jorge Blondett, an FDNY EMS technician and a Deacon at MCCNY, traveled to the stricken area in Louisiana to participate in rescue and relief activities.

Pastor Sees Controversy at NYC Veterans Day Parade

MCCNY's Pastor **Rev. Pat Bumgardner** and choir member **Claude Ashby** *(from left in photo)* and **City Councilmember Alan Gerson** *(in center)* marched up Fifth Avenue with the American Veterans for Equal Rights New York **(AVERNY)** contingent in NYC's Veterans Day Parade on Nov. 11th. The group included 3 gay World War II veterans. Rev. Pat later told the congregation that a parade organizer tried (unsuccessfully, in the end) to push the LGBT veterans group and their LGBT rainbow flag to the rear of the line of march. Her sermon cautioned parade organizers against any repetition of the incident next year. *(Photo courtesy Denny Meyer/ AVERNY)*

Scenes from a Spiritual Retreat

Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechettini, MCCNY's Director of Retreats, presided as the maximum capacity of 40 members and friends of the congregation took part in a 2-day spiritual retreat at the Incarnation Center in Ivoryton, CT, in October. Rev. Kristen conducts retreats for congregants and friends several times a year. *(Retreat photos by Deacon Noah Seaton)*

LGBT Expo at Javits Center

Outreach ministry volunteers *(coordinated by **Mario Guedes**, second from left in photo)* staffed MCCNY's booth at the LGBT Expo at the Javits Center for a total of 13 hours during the weekend of November 19th and 20th. Expo organizers said tens of thousands of persons attended the event. Mario (bless his heart) distributed copies of the last issue of the *Query* Newsletter all around the Expo hall and reported getting favorable reactions.

Save the Dates

- As we have reported in previous issues of *The Query*, Deacon and MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services Administrator Lucky Stephens Michaels' book Shelter is scheduled for release in November by Trolley Books London. Plans are under way for a release party in **November** so stay tuned.

- A concert to benefit MCCNY's Homeless Youth Services, the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry and Social Outreach will be held on **December 3, 2007** in The Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall at 8 p.m. The benefit is the brainchild of MCCNY musician Christopher Creviston (www.soundclick.com/christophercreviston) and will have performances by The Glass Farm Ensemble, The Creviston/Okada Duo, who will perform the world premiere of Pieces of Sanity by Stacy Garrop (www.garrop.com) and the Capitol Quartet (www.capitolquartet.com). Tickets will be available for purchase at MCCNY or on Carnegie Hall's website, www.carnegiehall.com.

- Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon *(right)* comes to MCCNY this fall. With Sybil's fabulous costumes, staging and music, this is not the bingo of our youth so get your tickets early as space is limited. Church Lady Bingo kicks off **October 12, 2007** in MCCNY's third floor gallery. For a complete list of dates for this monthly event, visit www.sybilbruncheon.com. It is going to be a fabulous season with Sybil, Fabio and their entourage.

HOMECOMING at MCCNY

The Metropolitan Community Church of New York will celebrate Homecoming on Sunday September 16, 2007.

Worship with us at our Traditional Liturgy at 9 am, our Celebration Liturgy at 11 am, our Mandarin Liturgy at 3 pm, and our Praise and Worship Liturgy at 7 pm.

The Rev. Dolores Berry will provide special music at the 9 am, 11 am and 7 pm services.

WELCOME HOME!

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

Global Justice Day: *A Liturgy for Justice*

by Mel Bryant

The worldwide movement of Metropolitan Community Churches celebrated its first Global Justice Day with a Liturgy for Justice on Sunday, July 1, 2007 at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Resort in Scottsdale, Arizona. Hundreds of MCCer's from across the country and around the globe arrived in Scottsdale prior to the denomination's General Conference to participate in the Liturgy. From New York to Nigeria, they came to claim and to proclaim justice and equality for all of God's people.

The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator of Metropolitan Community Churches, welcomed the congregation and introduced The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Chair of the Moderator's Global Justice Team and Senior Pastor of the Metropolitan Community Church of New York.

In her opening address, Rev. Pat said, "The issue is not whether we are 'activists' today, front line people or behind the scenes supporters, the issue before us is whether we are a people of hope, willing to stand together in creating a future of shared promise for all of us. Maybe in the end, affirming the old, old story of Jesus and of love…maybe recommitting ourselves as disciples of that way is what will forge a new, new world. That at least is my hope going into this day."

The Global Justice Choir, under the direction of MCCNY's Director of Music John Fischer, opened the celebration with *They Will Know We Are Christians by Our Love* and *On That Holy Mountain*. MCCNY soloist Carolyn Eufrasio's voice filled the ballroom as the magnitude of the work of MCC worldwide filled many of our hearts. For the afternoon service, John chose *Oh Freedom*. Carolyn and the choir brought the congregation to its feet as they sang along "Oh Yes I know. Freedom is coming."

As we reported in the last issue of *The Query*, the lessons for the liturgy were workshops on topics related to Global Justice. A Youth Panel, coordinated by Angel Collie from Imani MCC, Durham, NC, provided the response to the First Lesson. The panelists, including MCCers from Australia and Scotland, shared their perspectives with intelligence and inspiration. Scott Long from The Human Rights Watch delivered the sermon/plenary as the response to the Second Lesson. Scott spoke with passion about the history of the Human Rights Watch and where their work will take us as a community. Scott will be honored for his work by the denomination at a ceremony at MCCNY on October 17, 2007.

MCCNY's John Fischer conducting a workshop. (photo courtesy of UFMCC General Conference Photography Team: Mark Hahn, Rev. Karla Fleshman, and Sue McLean)

MCCNYers Mary Jane Gibney, Noah Seaton, Norma Sharpe, Candidate Gayle Davis, Intern Nessette Falu, Bradley Curry and Mel Bryant participated in the liturgy. The Rev. Kristen Klein-Cechetini flew in from Boston to serve as liturgist for the day.

After a community prayer led by The Rev. Robert Griffin of Sunshine Cathedral, Ft. Lauderdale, The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson and The Rev. Boon Lin Ngeo, MCCNY, celebrated Holy Communion. As MCCers of all ethnicities and of all ages, of diverse backgrounds but of one belief shared this most holy of meals and reflected on the day's events, we were reminded that we are all more alike than we are different and we committed ourselves to continue the work until equality and justice are available to all of God's people.

The Query Quarterly/*Fall 2007*

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MCCNY
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 22 nations. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator

A Homecoming Message from Rev. Pat Bumgardner:

September 2007

Dear Friends:

In this issue we welcome ourselves back from very full, hopefully at times restful, summer schedules. Many of us have traveled for pleasure and many with the purpose of furthering our business ventures or the work of the Church. All in all, whether we are talking Southeast Asia or southern Arizona, MCCNYers were in the forefront of a movement laying foundations for global justice and the pursuit of human rights.

In this issue of The Query*, much of that good work will be highlighted along with the community members who offered their time and talent. In reviewing the past few months and looking forward to the future, one theme consistently emerges: MCC and its global mission is worth believing in and worth supporting financially and worth sacrificing for personally and as a body of believers.*

And it is that theme that we will lift up on ***HOMECOMING SUNDAY, September 16th*** *at 9am, 11am and 7pm:* ***Worth Believing!***

New members will be asked if they believe in and are committed to not only the work of MCCNY but the wider vision and purpose of MCC in the world, and their affirmations will speak for all of us that Yes, MCC is worth believing in!

It is worth believing that there can and will be vibrant communities of faith and social action in Kuala Lumpur, in Penang, in Singapore, in Taiwan.

Just ask any of the 200 plus young people who crowded into Han Chiang College a few weeks ago, to hear someone say the simple and revolutionizing words, "God loves you as you are!"

It is worth believing that there can and will be a cure for HIV/AIDS, and that all people with HIV should and can have access to the best and most holistic approaches to care and treatment. That belief alone laid the foundation for MCCNY's new free on-site HIV testing.

It's worth believing that all God's children have a purpose in this world, and given the opportunity and support can honor that purpose. Our Finishing School for Tranny Girls is living proof that believing is the first step toward seeing things into reality.

Pick any aspect of what MCC offers — it all started with believing someone and something was worth it.

Every time I run into Daniel (Dilo), a former resident of Sylvia's Place, who now has his own apartment — or Robin, who will enter Babson College this fall, as an openly Transgender woman, and who also found her way home through this congregation's Homeless Youth Services, I know beyond a shadow of a doubt that ***MCC is worth believing in!***

Over the years, many different people have made many of God's dreams and visions for New York City and the wider world around us possible, because they believed in the simple truths that comprise the foundation of our faith here: God is with us and with God all things are possible. We have held steadfastly to our faith in love and its power to heal and save all of us. Indeed, as the hymns we cherish say, we've come this far by faith, and faith will lead us home.

I hope and pray our faith will lead us all home on September 16th, as we not only look back with pride but forward with faith, hope and love — all that's worth believing in!

With love,

The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Pastor

Letter from the Editor:

Dear Family and Friends,

Fall is approaching…I know this not because the first of the fall fashion issues arrived today but because almost everything on the summer's to do list is done.

We marched to show our Pride. We welcomed new members into our congregation. We traveled to Scottsdale to celebrate Global Justice and to represent MCCNY at General Conference. We traveled to Malaysia to continue building a ministry there. We hosted our largest Gallery Night ever. We celebrated Jada's and Daniel's holy matrimony. We graduated from Finishing School. We dedicated the Marsha P. Johnson Center for LGBT youth.

Sadly, there were some things we had to do that weren't on that list. We mourned the losses of Jackson Hall and Rose Peligrino, two spirits who may not have been members of MCCNY but were absolutely members of our community. We will certainly miss them.

Fall's to do list includes the return of some of our ministries that took a much deserved hiatus this summer and some exciting new programs and events including Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon, the launch of Deacon Lucky's book Shelter and A Benefit Concert for Metropolitan Community Charities at Carnegie Hall, so read on.

Come home on Sunday, September 16, 2007, and share the good news of God's inclusive love as we celebrate Homecoming with the Rev. Dolores Berry blessing us with special music at all 3 services.

Enjoy the issue.

Mel Bryant, Editor

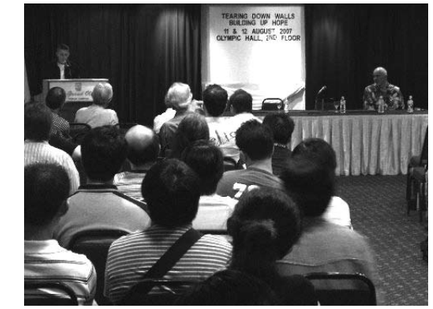
The QUERY

Editor . . . . . Mel Bryant
Graphic Design and Layout Editor . . . . . Les LaRue
Editorial Assistant. . . . . .Casey Easterling
Staff Photographer . . . . . Montel Cherry
Contributors . . . . . Kate Barnhart, Samantha Box, Montel Cherry, Phillip DeBlieck, Casey Easterling, Ed Finder, John McGee, Chris Stadmeyer, Marcus Warren

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018 • Phone: (212) 629-7440 • www.mccny.org
Sunday Worship Services at 9 a.m. (traditional),11 a.m. (celebration), and 7 p.m. (praise & worship)
On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30 p.m.,Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 85

MCC in Malaysia – Excerpts from Rev. Pat's Travelogue

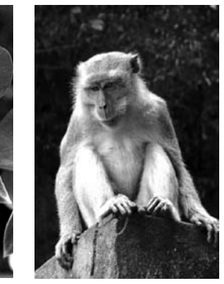
On July 27, 2007 a six member team began the second phase of a multi-year plan to open an MCC community of faith embodying the Gospel vision of social justice in Malaysia. What we found happening in the year since our last visit astounded us. Indeed, a great cloud of witnesses has arisen — all kinds of Queer and allied people, from many walks of life, coming together to take the kinds of risks and make the kinds of sacrifices necessary to further the vision.



Again and again MCCers were brought face to face with the Gospel imperative to practice what we preach — to be a house of spiritual life and vitality for all God's people. The three prong vision upon which we were founded is as urgently in need of fulfillment in our world now as it was thirty nine years ago.

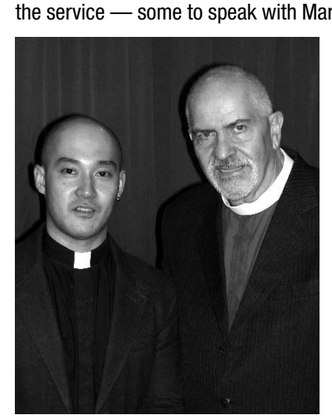
And the cry for its fulfillment is being echoed especially among the young. — Penang is a small island about five hours outside of Kuala Lumpur. Speaking before an audience of almost 200 in a room that could comfortably seat about 100 on the campus of Han Chiang College, Rev. Boon's address entitled "Confessions of a Gay Man" received a standing ovation. His humor won the crowd over, when responding to an inquisitor's request for even one passage in the Bible that says it is OK to be gay, he said — "We use cell phones and computers and send instant messages all the time, yet never in the Bible is such behavior explicitly sanctioned." — "It made me want to stand up and shout, 'I am gay,'" said the young and closeted Candidate for the Baptist Ministry next to Rev. Pat. Unfortunately, to do that would likely cost him his job, his church family, and possibly the roof over his head.

Coming out is an ongoing issue and debate among most of the people we met with. On Saturday, August 11th, about 150 people gathered in a small hotel banquet room to hear Rev. Perry share his inspiring story and to attend a workshop on the topic presented by Mary Jane Gibney. Mary Jane held the crowd's attention for almost ninety minutes as she carefully addressed the stages of coming out, the cultural factors and the importance of self-honesty from a mental health perspective. Her gentle, yet knowledgeable approach was quite reassuring to one young man who bravely asked if there was something wrong with him. Many of the workshop attenders returned for the foundational worship service on the 12th.

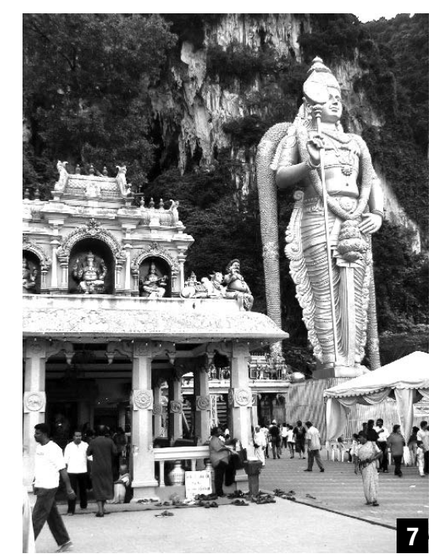


On Sunday, August 12th, the first MCC service in Kuala Lumpur was held in a second floor banquet room of the Grand Olympic Hotel, Jalen Hang Jebat. One hundred ten people joined in offering praise and thanksgiving, singing in English and Bahasa Malayu, the native tongue of Malaysia. Our friends from FCC in Singapore traveled four hours to be present and to provide the musical accompaniment.

Rev. Perry's inspiring sermon on Luke's 4th chapter and the words, "The Spirit of God is upon me, for God has anointed me to preach good news" resonated deeply with the crowd. An open communion, as in all MCC services, was celebrated and slowly most of those gathered came forward for a blessing, many for the first time in several years. Folks lingered following the service — some to speak with Mary Jane about their coming out process; some to talk with Rev. Pat about their love lives and how to pick up women (no lie!), their spiritual dilemmas and whether to remain in condemning religious settings, and their desires to be free as Queer people. And many just sat still in their chairs for a long time, watching quietly, while reporters interviewed Rev. Perry and Rev. Boon *(at left)*. It was as if they didn't want to leave this safe and welcoming space. Our prayer is that soon they won't have to — that soon and very soon there will be a spiritual center in Kuala Lumpur where all God's children find their welcome, their comfort, their peace and their promise. That's the vision that is coming to birth in Kuala Lumpur.



(photos by Phillip DeBlieck)



News from MCCNY Homeless Youth Services *by Kate Barnhart*

Shelter Success Story

(Photo by Montel Cherry)

Daniel "Dilo" Cintron *(right)* has been part of Sylvia's Place since the early days. At 19, Dilo, who grew up in institutions in his native St Croix, decided to make his way to the US in search of a better life and more acceptance as a gay man. Alone, in an unfamiliar country, Dilo got off to a good start, working in food services, but quickly found himself in trouble and wound up in jail. After his release, Dilo began receiving services at a variety of programs, including the Neutral Zone, where I first met him and referred him to Sylvia's Place. Once he became more stable, Dilo started getting more involved in the community, participating in various youth leadership activities and becoming an advocate for gay rights, the needs of the homeless, and the mentally ill with groups such as Picture the Homeless and Fountain House. Now, at 26 years old, Dilo lives in an apartment in Queens with his cat and fish. He is an active member at Fountain House, does a lot of public speaking about his experiences as a homeless gay youth and volunteers at MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services. When the Marsha P Johnson Center opens, Dilo will put his food service experience to good use as a Kitchen Intern, preparing and serving hot meals to youth who are now in the situation he was once in.

Trans Day at the Beach

Coney Island looked gayer than ever on August 11, 2007, as approximately 30 youth, staff, volunteers and friends from MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services joined the Center's Gender Identity Project for Trans Day at the Beach. Residents frolicked in the water, sunbathed, and lunched in the sand.

(Photo by Samantha Box)

Queer Spirit Camp

Thanks to the generosity of several donors, 10 youth from MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services spent a week in July at Queer Spirit Camp in Easton Mountain in upstate NY. Although some who had never been out of the city before were frightened by the quiet and darkness, the residents came back refreshed by the fresh air, good food, swimming, art activities, and the chance to escape the daily stress of being homeless.

Free HIV Testing Now Available at MCCNY *by Chris Stadmeyer*

The Metropolitan Community Church of New York's Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry has begun offering free HIV testing every other Thursday from 9 a.m. - 12 p.m. The HIV testing is a collaborative effort between the food pantry and The Partnership for the Homeless, a non-profit organization committed to fostering a just society and ultimately ending homelessness in New York City. A trained staff member from Partnership for the Homeless will conduct the testing on the first floor of the Church and provide results within 30 minutes. Pastoral staff from MCCNY is available for counseling during and after the testing hours. Dates for testing through the end of the year are September 13 and 27, October 11 and 25, November 8 and 22 and December 6 and 20, 2007.

A Report from General Conference *by Casey Easterling*

Metropolitan Community Churches held its General Conference July 2-6, 2007 in Scottsdale, AZ at the Fairmont Scottsdale Princess Resort.

General Conference was a mix of business, worship, education and socializing for members from MCC's around the world.

A Business Forum addressed any questions about the proposed changes to the bylaws. Morning and evening worship services were held that featured different musical talents and worship styles. Plenaries were offered on diverse topics such as justice within various Christian denominations and HIV/AIDS.

A variety of workshops were held throughout the conference. Topics included Marriage and Family Equality; The Human Rights Church; Hope for Our Bodies: Living Longer, Feeling Better; AIDS and the "Kairotic Moment": The Sacred Partnership of Healing and Social Justice; and Increasing Local Market Awareness of Your Church.

Affinity Groups such as Asian Pacific Islanders, Bisexuality, Cancer Survivors, Clergy Spouses, Disability Forum, First Nations/Aboriginal People, HIV Spirit Space, Trans-Inclusive, Women in Ministry and Young Adult Social met nightly.

There was a screening of *Call Me Troy*, a documentary about the Rev. Dr. Troy Perry, founder and moderator emeritus of Metropolitan Community Churches. Other activities included MCC Karaoke, Dive in Movies, the Oral History Project as part of the upcoming 40th anniversary of MCC and a Fundraising Golf Tournament.

On the final evening the Rev. Pat Bumgardner and her partner Mary Jane Gibney hosted a wonderful gathering for MCCNY's delegation. It was an opportunity to reconnect and discuss the week's activities.

My Friend Jackson Hall *by Ed Finder*

Jackson Hall, who passed away June 16, 2007 after a mercifully brief but nasty battle with liver cancer, was my domestic partner, a grand friend, and the most endearing and dedicated person I have ever known. Last June, I was diagnosed with throat cancer. Jackson, with incredible fervor, nursed and coaxed me back to health, with help from our good friend Sid Torres, and the continuing support and prayers of Rev. Pat.

I know that I join his friends all over the world in missing him profoundly: his gentle and soothing demeanor, his appreciation and love for people and for ideas, for poetry and for music. Most of all, we will all sorely miss the exquisite glass works that he created with an inveterate sense of precision, dedication and respect for his chosen medium. The eloquent statement by The Reverend Dr. Troy D. Perry truly captures the spirit of Jackson and his art.

"…They illuminate places of worship with God's light and powerfully convey MCC's deepest spiritual messages of God's love and affirmation. I thank God for Jackson Hall's ability to connect people with deep spiritual values through the gifted combination of beauty, artistry, and nature."

—Rev Dr.Troy Perry-2006

Jackson Lee Hall was born on April 2, 1948 in New York City. His early upbringing was in Vero Beach, Florida. After a stint in the U.S. Navy, Jackson served for some twenty years as a research scientist focusing on pathologies at the University of California at Berkeley. He retired from the University to pursue his lifelong love for glass. He studied under Narcissus Quaqliata, renowned for his pioneering work with the figure and portraiture in glass.

Jackson's legacy will live on forever at MCCNY. We are all grateful.

"…His life was gentle
and the elements
So mixed in them that
nature might stand up
And say to all the world,
'This was a man!'"
—William Shakespeare,
Julius Caesar

Jackson Hall (Photo by Ed Finder)

My Memories of Rose Pelegrino *By Marcus Warren*

My memories of Rose are fond ones: she would always volunteer for our Community dinners the last Tuesdays of the month and our Bread of Life dinners the last Thursdays of the month. Even though the only things she did were to gather all the spoons, forks, and napkins, and then when she finished, help us serve the dinners, she did this with such love.

Other things that I will always remember about Rose were her fondness for any type of figurines of cats and her love of chocolate. Anything concerning cats and chocolate would always cause her to light up. We miss her presence and it feels like a part of the process at the end of the month is missing. We will miss her dearly.

(Photo by Montel Cherry)

New Members

On Pride Sunday, June 24, 2007, the congregation of the Metropolitan Community Church of New York welcomed *(pictured left to right)* Jerry Shafnisky, Tamara Smith, Vincent Filliatre, Massimo Mascoli, Percy Freeman and John Normile into membership at the 9 a.m service.

Gallery Night *by Montel Cherry*

On June 13, 2007 MCCNY held its largest Gallery Night to date with over 350 people perusing and buying artwork. Over $2300 of artwork was sold and 25 percent of those proceeds went to MCCNY.

Featured artist Patti Rothberg drew a large group of followers, including high school class mate and Academy Award winning actress Mira Sorvino. There was a piece on Page Six of the *New York Post* mentioning Mira Sorvino's presence at MCCNY Gallery Night! The following Sunday, Patti's "Kitsch Encounters" collection was photographed during a television interview in our gallery. This was the first Gallery Night that had a featured artist and due to its incredible success, an artist will continue to be featured at future gallery events.

(Photo by Montel Cherry)

Our very own Les LaRue displayed his work of self-portraits that impressed everyone. Les has shared his artistry talents for *the Query* and it was moving and special that he shared, on Gallery Night, work that is so introspective and personal.

Molly Bea, who is produced by our Soren Anders, was the performer at Gallery Night and she wowed the crowd with her vocal range, musical style and gracious stage presence.

The next Gallery Night will be October 5, 2007. David Braun will be the featured artist and the gallery will be dedicated to the memory of Jackson Hall. Mark your calendars and spread the word.

PRIDE!

(Photos by Montel Cherry)

The Wedding of Jada and Daniel

Jada Suqira Frederick and Daniel Clayton Rouse *(pictured at left)* were joined in holy matrimony on Sunday, June 17, 2007 at the Metropolitan Community Church of New York. The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Senior Pastor of MCCNY officiated. The bride was escorted by Mr. Marcus Warren. Ms. LaShaye Frederick Williams, sister of the bride, served as maid of honor, Ms. Kenyata Taiste, daughter of the bride, served as a bridesmaid and Ms. Samatha Jones Kavanaugh, friend of the bride, served as flower girl. Mr. John Rouse served as his brother's best man and Mr. Zion Williams served as a groomsman. Mr. and Mrs. Rouse were celebrated at a gala reception following the 7 p.m. Praise and Worship Liturgy, catered by Mr. Warren, in the church's third floor gallery. *(photo by Montel Cherry)*

Finishing School Graduation

The charter class of Rev. Pat's Finishing School for Tranny Girls graduated from the first cycle of workshops on Stonewall Sunday, June 17, 2007 at the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy. Rev. Pat, Deacon Mel Bryant, Board Member Nina Schnell and Bass Designer Daniel Schnorbus presented the graduates with Certificates of Completion for their participation. Mrs. Jada Frederick Rouse *(at left)* was named Valedictorian of the class and will receive a business suit tailored specifically for her. The workshops meet on the last Thursday of every month following the Bread of Life dinner and will resume on September 27, 2007. *(Photos by John McGee))*

MCCNY Dedicates the Marsha P. Johnson Center

The Nation's only 24-Hour Emergency Drop-in Center for LGBTQ Youth

By Casey Easterling

On Friday, July 20, 2007, the Metropolitan Community Church of New York dedicated the Marsha P. Johnson Center, the nation's only 24-hour emergency drop-in center for at-risk LGBTQ youth. This facility, located at 151 West 127th Street in New York City, is the newest division of MCCNY's Homeless Youth Services.

A 24-hour drop-in center was much needed as Kate Barnhart *(left)*, Director of Homeless Youth Services for MCCNY, explained during her touching address at the opening. When a parent throws a LGBTQ child out, it is not always during normal business hours. When a LGBTQ person makes the decision to leave an abusive relationship or run away from a violent pimp, it is sometimes during the middle of the night or on a holiday. She went on to say that not everyone needs or wants overnight accommodations like those at MCCNY's other facilities, Sylvia's Place and Sylvia's East, and so this Center will meet that need and provide a first step to get youth interested in longer-term options.

The Marsha P. Johnson Center will be a harm-reduction facility where youth can turn in times of crisis. Clients will be able to meet with counselors, health-care professionals and tutors. Fresh clothes, hot meals and exercise classes are among the other services that will be available.

At the ceremonial opening, visitors had the opportunity to meet the staff and volunteers who make MCCNY's Homeless Youth Services so successful and tour the facility. The mistress of ceremonies for the evening, Ms. Trai La Trash, performed and pledged to raise the money to carpet the yoga room. Spare Change, Tighter and Plushus entertained the guests and Bama, a resident of Sylvia's Place, recited a powerful poem she had written. The Rev. Pat Bumgardner blessed the space, the staff and the volunteers who will work there *(above)*.

Mr. Bob Kohler *(right)* offered one of the highlights of the evening as he shared personal memories of the Center's namesake, Marsha P Johnson. He talked about everything from her hats to her attitude, enlightening those in the audience who were not lucky enough to have known her. As Mr. Kohler stated, the naming of the Center could not have been more appropriate given her work as an African American transgendered activist.

The Center will officially open once the sprinkler system is installed. If you'd like to make a donation or volunteer, please visit **http://homelessyouthservices.org/registry/registry.php** for a current list of needs. *(Photos by Montel Cherry)*

The Welcoming Team at MCCNY

By Casey Easterling

Attending a new church can be a scary experience, especially for those of us in the Queer community who have felt the pain of judgment from past churches. For this reason, MCCNY has started a Welcoming Team Ministry to ease the anxiety of first-time visitors.

The Welcoming Team's first step is to address the concerns of potential visitors before they visit MCCNY. For many people, the internet is the first contact with an MCC church. As potential visitors peruse the MCCNY website (www.mccny.org) or MySpace page (www.myspace.com/mccny) there are links to email the Welcoming Team. Each email gets a personalized response addressing whatever questions or concerns they have.

Some of the emails have addressed new member classes, what to wear to church or what books are available for more information. Other emails have been powerful pleas for hope from people who feel that their life is suffering because they lack a spiritual home.

The Welcoming Team's next step was to pass out nametags at the 11am worship service. Many people were grateful for the chance to learn the names of new attendees as well as long-time members. The social hours that follow the worship services now have more pleasant chatter as people are no longer hindered from initiating a conversation because they don't know someone's name.

The most rewarding but unexpected part of passing out the nametags has been the positioning of the Welcoming Team at the church's front door. It has been incredibly valuable to visitors to see a friendly face as they decide whether or not to enter that first time.

Most recently, Casey Easterling, the organizer of the Welcoming Team, offered a workshop that 12 MCCNYers attended. The event included the poignant sharing of personal journeys that led us to MCCNY. Anonymous quotes from Welcoming Team emails were shared that gave insight into the concerns of our current visitors. The culmination of the event was the creation of individual collages that shared personal stories of what MCCNY has meant to each person's life.

The work of the Welcoming Team has just begun. It has been rewarding to help others experience the joy and acceptance many of us have found at MCCNY.

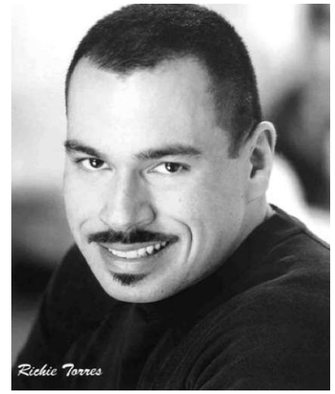
MCCNY Launches *The Congregation Revealed* *By Mel Bryant*

On Sunday, June 8, 2008, the pilot for *The Congregation Revealed* was taped in the Jackson Hall Art Gallery at MCCNY.

The Congregation Revealed is the brainchild of Deacon Len Richardson and Richie Torres *(at right)*. In each episode, Richie interviews members of the MCCNY congregation to reveal interesting (to say the least!) things about their lives that people may or may not know. His sense of humor and ability to draw information out of his guests really keeps things lively and, well, revealing!

Did you know, for example, that Bradley Curry's first job after graduating from Northwestern University was as a flight attendant for ATA or that the Dr. in Reverend Edgard's title is actually a doctorate in chemistry and that he taught chemistry at the University of Puerto Rico for 16 years or that Sophia Pazos…okay, you'll have to watch the episode for that one.

The next episode will tape in July so watch your bulletins for the date and line-up of guests.



PRIDE at MCCNY

Sunday, June 29 **Celebrate Pride with MCCNY!**

9 am **(Traditional Liturgy)**
11 am **(Celebration Liturgy)**
7 pm **(Praise & Worship Service)**

Pride Parade on 5th Avenue:

MCCNY float (line-up after 11 am service)
52nd St. between 5th/6th Avenues

Communion in the Streets!
Binghamton Congregation celebrates Pride with MCCNY!

Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

MCC Consecrates First MCC in Asia *By Mel Bryant*

(Photos of Malaysia by Stanley Ng)

The Reverend Pat Bumgardner, Chair of the Moderator's Global Justice Team and Senior Pastor of MCCNY and the Reverend Boon Lin Ngeo, MCCNY, traveled to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia last month to consecrate MCCNY's congregation there.

The Good Samaritan Fellowship MCCNY is the first Metropolitan Community Church in Asia.

Reverend Pat and Reverend Boon led a two day retreat in the Cameron Highlands on Friday and Saturday, May 23 and 24, 2008 before consecrating the congregation on Sunday, May 25, 2008.

This new congregation joins its MCCNY family that includes the 9 a.m. Traditional Liturgy, the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy, the 3 p.m. Mandarin Service, the 7 p.m. Praise and Worship Liturgy, the Binghamton Congregation and the T.V. Ministry through Time Warner Cable local access.

When he returned to New York and preached at MCCNY on Sunday, June 15, 2008, Reverend Boon shared the story of a young man in Malaysia who, every night for the last 20 years, had prayed, asking God for forgiveness of sin, the sin of his sexuality. The Good Samaritan Fellowship MCCNY had finally given him, he said, a place of acceptance and love where he knew that God's love was available to him as a gay man.

Reverent Boon went on to say, "We are saving lives, literally. Gay people who would have considered suicide because of their sexuality now know the truth."

This new congregation that started with 4 individuals but has grown to 18 is a powerful witness to the good news of God's transforming love.

Reverend Pat Travels to Pakistan *By Mel Bryant*

After consecrating Good Samaritan Fellowship MCCNY in Kuala Lumpur, Reverend Pat traveled to Pakistan to meet with members of the LGBTQ community there. When she returned to New York, she shared with MCCNY publicly the witness that is happening around the world. It was because of the MCCNY website that community leaders in Pakistan reached out, she shared, and that is a testament to the work that MCCNY is doing, not only in and for New York City, but around the world.

The community in Pakistan is so excited to have found MCCNY, she went on to say, that they are already calling themselves MCC Pakistan. "This is the work we have been called to do," she said, "here and around the world."

May God continue to bless our siblings, here and around the world.

The Query Quarterly/*Summer 2008*

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MCCNY
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 22 nations. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator

A Pride Message from Rev. Pat Bumgardner:

Live. Love. Be. Who I Am Makes a Difference!

Dear friends:

As I contemplate this year's Pride theme — Live! Love! Be! Who I am Makes a Difference! — I am fresh from many challenging and inspiring, as well as yet-to-be-fully-integrated, often confusing experiences in Jamaica, Malaysia and Pakistan. — Though the locations and cultures varied widely, one thing was amazingly consistent: the strong, strong spirit of life and love that fueled a deep, deep desire on the part of everyone I met, from the village elder in a rural settlement of the Pakistani countryside to the young gay men coming of age on an island of the Caribbean, to make a difference in their communities and in the world.

In Sadohke, a rural settlement outside of Green Town in Pakistan, a young school girl discussing very adult topics — like the state of her country's economy and the issue of human equality — rose to say that she would make a difference in her nation and in the world by valuing the lives of girl children and boy children equally.

Outside of Lahore, a group of underground Lesbians have a plan to make a difference not only for themselves, but for other young women coming after them. They want to organize collectively, pool their resources and one by one work their way into freedom from oppressive cultural norms and for a better future.

In the Cameron Highlands outside of Kuala Lumpur, young gay men articulated their hopes and dreams for the future, believing that coming out will change the course of history in Malaysia and make a difference for future generations. — It was only two years ago that these same young men were terrified to admit even behind closed doors that they were gay or bisexual or transgender. MCC has made a tremendous difference in their lives.

And MCC is making a tremendous difference in the lives of our community in Jamaica. In Kingston, volunteers vowed to make a difference — to put an end to the violence and hatred against Queer people so often tolerated and encouraged — by developing pilot programs for school age children so that they can learn and practice acceptance of diversity, and developing public education campaigns to eliminate "murder music" and dance hall bashing and promote positive lyrics.

Few, if any, of the people I met with who have such passion and courage for life and the possibilities life on earth harbors, have much in the way of worldly resources. What they do have, in addition to their courage and conviction, is a firm and abiding belief that Queer people are God's people and together we can make a difference.

We live in strange and wonderful, blessed and challenging times — in some parts of our world, like Uganda and Nigeria, Queer people are struggling simply for the right to exist; in others, like the United States, we are celebrating recent court victories on marriage equality. What seems most important to me — what people who have every reason not to care about what happens here, in the States, but who do care passionately taught me — is that if we stand together; if we see what is happening around the globe as part of God's big picture plan to bring the world to just and right-relationship, we can make a difference.

As St. Paul wrote long ago, All creation is waiting on tip toe for the revelation of the daughters and sons of God! I have been a privileged witness to places where that revelation is breaking through, and my prayer has become, Thank you, God, for all you are doing. Help me to live and love and be in a way that will add my life to those who are already making so much of a difference in your world. May those simple words become the prayer of all our hearts this holy Pride Season.

With love,

Rev. Pat

Letter from the Editor:

Dear Family and Friends,

Live. Love. Be. Who I Am Makes a Difference. *As I think about these words, I am moved by the many ways that we can, and do, make a difference in the lives of those around us.*

Susan makes a difference in the lives of those in need, letting them know someone cares when they receive her postcards.

Chris and his staff make a difference in the lives of hungry New Yorkers, working to increase and upgrade their experience as clients of the pantry.

Arnold and Scout make a difference in the lives of the young people served by MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services, nurturing them, body and mind.

Valerie makes a difference in the lives of Burmese refugees, raising money to help them tell their story.

Norma and MCCNY's delegation to PAD's 10th Anniversary Conference make a difference in the lives of their allies on the journey, worshipping and fellowshipping to share the good news of God's inclusive love.

Reverend Pat and the Global Justice Team certainly make a difference in the lives of our LGBTQ brothers and sisters around the world, praying and preaching, meeting and marching, for their right to live, to love, to be.

As we celebrate our Pride this month, be proud of who you are because who you are, one of God's beloveds, does make a difference.

Enjoy the issue and Happy Pride!

Mel Bryant, Editor

The QUERY

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On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30pm, Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 85

Trans Health Conference *By Scout Rose*

On May 30th a group of 10 clients and staff from MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services made their way down to Philadelphia for the 7th Annual Trans Health Conference. It was an inspiring and educational trip for all involved as conference goers took part in two days of workshops and networking. Participants chose between a variety of workshops on topics including transgender parenting, femme identity, and holistic herbal care for trans folks and gender variant spirituality. Many in the group spent quality time checking out the vending tables, talking with non-profits and health practitioners from around the country. We set up our own MCCNY vending table, where William Moran-Berberena, Executive Director of MCC Charities, spoke with other conference attendees about the many services MCCNY offers to members of the trans-community. As always, MCCNY's signature "God Made Me Trans" stickers were a big hit. The conference concluded with a truly inspirational keynote address from transwoman activist, Miss Major, followed by a poetry performance with the Hip Hop Feminist Nation. An old friend and comrade of Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson, Miss Major delivered a fiery speech about the importance of advocating for oneself and fighting for the rights of people of transgender experience. She also stressed the value of community and personal healing, and reminded us to take care of each other in the struggle. The group returned to New York feeling renewed and excited about transgender empowerment. I know we are all looking forward to next year's conference.

Above, clients and staff from MCCNY Homeless Youth Services at the Trans Health Conference in Philadelphia. At right, William Moran-Berberena, Executive Director of MCC Charities, seated at the MCCNY table.

Reflections from an MCCNY Homeless Youth Services Volunteer *by Arnold J. Mungioli*

When the youth from MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services first started coming to church, I was scared of them. I would take my backpack with me to communion out of fear that they would steal it. I did not know them. Fear was bred out of what I did not know. It always is. Then through a mild experience of divine revelation, I came to realize that the skills I had honed working in the theater and as a teacher were intended to be shared with these young people. I contacted Kate and Reverend Pat with an idea and with their support I started a Drama Class for the shelter youth at the Marsha P. Johnson Center. On my last birthday, a friend of mine who is an astrologer told me that this year I would be meeting people who would become as close to me as the closest friends of my life. Entirely new circles of friends would enter my life – that these friends would be the shelter youth would have been my very last guess! But of course, I did not know them.

Now I have been working with them every week for almost five months and in that short time they have filled my heart! Now I know them. Fear has been transformed into love.

Drama Class has evolved into Improv Group and I have learned so many things about teaching, about people, about lives outside of my own and about myself! I have grown and changed in ways that I could never have imagined and did not even know that I needed to or could have! I have also discovered that while I thought I was being guided here to teach, I was in fact being guided here to learn.
I am most richly blessed.

Arnold J. Mungioli
Volunteer, MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services

MCC Region 3 Children and Youth Ministry Leaders Summit *by Mel Bryant*

William Moran-Berberena, executive director of MCCNY Charities, and Mel Bryant, Sunday school teacher *(pictured third and fourth from left, back row in photo at left)*, attended the 3rd annual Children and Youth Ministry Leaders Summit in Baltimore, Maryland on Saturday, May 3, 2008. Eighteen MCCers representing 9 of the churches in Region 3 spent the day sharing experiences and ideas for our children and youth programming.

(Photo courtesy of Jan Creamer, MCC of the Chesapeake)

Changes at the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry *by Chris Stadmeyer, Director*

The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry has two large projects that it plans to develop this summer. The first project is converting our grocery distribution style to a Client Choice model. Currently, the majority of food pantries across the country distribute pre-packaged bags of canned goods. This results in people receiving food that they cannot use due to personal preference and religious or dietary restrictions. Client Choice eliminates this waste by giving clients the opportunity to choose food they can use in a grocery store style setting. The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry has started Client Choice on a limited scale and the response has been overwhelmingly positive. The opportunity to select their own groceries means that clients choose food they will eat and not waste and provides a much more positive experience. One client recently said, "This is great. I feel like I've been shopping at the grocery store."

The second project that will be blooming through the summer is the rooftop vegetable garden. Tomatoes, eggplant, zucchini and squash are growing in pots on the roof of our building and will supply the pantry and Sylvia's Place, our homeless youth shelter, with fresh vegetables. In urban areas across the country we are losing touch with the origins of our food and are falling victim to the industrial food system that is full of pesticides, genetically modified organisms and unsustainable development. In addition to supplying our programs with fresh produce, the rooftop garden hopes to make efficient use of the limited open space in our city and take back ownership of our food.

The food pantry is also proud to announce the arrival of Sarah Wilson, our new AmeriCorps volunteer. Through our partnership with the New York City Coalition Against Hunger, she will be helping with program development and grant writing.

Throughout the summer, the pantry will continue to host a case management table sponsored by Connecting to Advantages every Thursday at 9 a.m. to assist clients with issues ranging from food stamp applications to tax assistance to free children's summer camp information, a benefits outreach table sponsored by Positive Health Project every Wednesday, Thursday and Friday from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. and free HIV testing sponsored by the Latino AIDS Commission on alternate Thursdays from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m. Clients who participate in the HIV testing will receive, when available, a four dollar Metrocard and a gift card to Best Buy.

In April, as part of Volunteer Appreciation Week, we hosted a volunteer appreciation party for all of the volunteers here at MCCNY. It was a great opportunity to meet volunteers from the different programs. If you would like to be part of our volunteer family or would like to make a donation, please call us at 212-629-7440.

(Photo by Chris Stadmeyer)

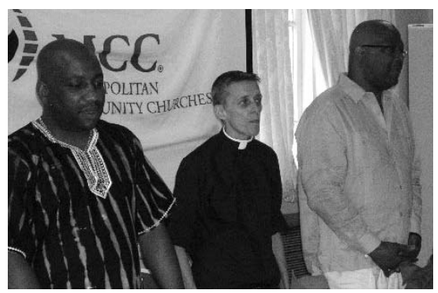
Bradley Curry, Rev. Pat and John Garrett, pictured above, at the Volunteer Appreciation Party. John has served MCCNY as sexton for 9 years.

Reverend Pat Travels to Jamaica *by Mel Bryant*

The Reverend Pat Bumgardner, Chair of the Moderator's Global Justice Team traveled to Jamaica with Councilman Ken Reeves of Cambridge, MA, the Reverend Robert Griffin of Sunshine Cathedral MCC Fort Lauderdale and Tom Scaringelli who provided security on May 9 - 12, 2008 to continue building MCC's presence in Jamaica and to increase awareness of the violence against LGBT people there.

The delegation hosted an AIDS Prayer Vigil on Friday the 9th of May where, as Reverend Edgard Francisco reported from the pulpit, they "prayed like heaven" for those lost to and living with HIV/AIDS. An MCC Jamaica Prayer Breakfast was held on Saturday morning followed by a Community Leadership Meeting that included members of Family and Friends Who Care, Jamaica's version of PFLAG. On Sunday, May 11, 2008, Reverend Pat preached at Sunshine Cathedral Jamaica and 22 new members were received into their congregation, bringing their total membership to 137.

In his interviews and speeches, Councilman Reeves, who is Jamaican, spoke passionately about not standing by while Jamaicans, particularly members of the LGBT community, were suffering from violence and hate.



(Photos courtesy of Rev. Robert Griffin)

PAD Conference *by Norma J. Sharp*

A shy person in charge of registration?! Me?! I know, church family, that this is a little known fact. But nonetheless it is true! There I was in St. Louis as the Onsite Team Lead anticipating the arrival of more than 200 attendees of PAD's 10th Anniversary Conference!

Due to a scheduling conflict by the hotel, we could not open registration on time. We opened more than an hour late, not a good way to begin! As the attendees appeared to arrive, I felt like a deer caught in a car's headlights! However, my first set of volunteers who were Allies from our host church, MCC of Greater St. Louis, were extremely calm and well organized. They soon reassured me that things would be just fine and yes, they were correct.

"On the Move" the 10th anniversary gathering of PAD in MCC exceeded our expectations in a big way. Over 300 of us sang, worshipped, hugged, cried, renewed old friendships and made new ones during those three days. During one of the many activities, 1st time attendees were asked to stand. They numbered at least half of those gathered.

"PAD was an experience I will never forget and one that I would look forward to reliving. I learned so much and met so many new people. The songs, the preaching and the fellowship working together to take me to another level with God…" says Jen Heyward, 1st time attendee.

"It was a Blessing for me to be with all of my siblings 'An Momma an Dem'. I'm praying for everyone and cannot wait until the next Family Reunion" Noah Seaton said of his 4th PAD gathering.

Although a great deal of my time was spent at registration, one of my fondest memories is of seeing Rev. Dr. Renee McCoy, who was our keynote speaker. Rev. McCoy was my first MCC pastor whom I had not seen in over 20 years.

(Photo courtesy of Norma Sharpe)

MCCNY represented at the People of African Descent Conference.

I learned a great deal from my time at PAD but by far what touched me the most was something that happened after the conference. Many of us worshipped with MCC of Greater St. Louis that Sunday. Two of my volunteers Jackie and Bettye, allies on the journey, came over to me prior to communion and invited me to take communion with them. These two senior women had been my right and left hands throughout registration. Their kindness truly defines what it means to be a servant.

I am forever changed.

More photos of PAD's 10th Anniversary Conference are available online at www.flickr.com/photos/mccchurch/

(Photo by Montel Cherry)

Gayle Davis Graduates from New York Theological Seminary

Candidate Gayle Davis *(receiving diploma at left)* graduated from New York Theological Seminary on Saturday, May 17, 2008 with a Masters Degree in Divinity at the beautiful Riverside Church. As part of MCC's ordination process, Gayle will attend the intensives this summer to be approved for ordination. Gayle, who works closely with MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services, will attend Drew University this fall to begin work on her doctorate. Gayle will be studying under Traci West, a preeminent ethicist. Gayle was the only student accepted into this program.

Church Lady Bingo *by Mel Bryant*

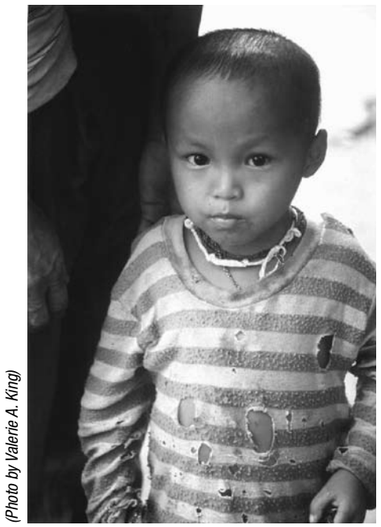
Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon *(at right)* wrapped up its first season here at MCCNY on Friday, June 13, 2008 with a gala birthday celebration for Noah Seaton. Noah delighted the crowd as he shuffled into the gallery wearing a t-shirt with the slogan "It's a Sin to Look This Good at 60" and oversized plaid shorts. After singing "Happy Birthday to You" and enjoying a homemade chocolate cake provided by Sarah Wilson, Sybil presented Noah with a custom made jigsaw puzzle of herself and publicly thanked him for his devotion to Church Lady Bingo.

MCCNY would also like to thank our sponsors for their support of our first season. Donated prizes from Faces and Names, Xanadu, Cry Baby, Hudson Yards Café and 44X helped make our first season a tremendous success.

Sybil, Gefil, DJ Sugar and the rest of the cast will return in October for our next season of Church Lady Bingo so watch for the Homecoming issue of *The Query* for the dates.

Easter at MCCNY! *(Photos by Montel Cherry, Sarah Lewis, and Colleen Sovory)*

A Letter from Valerie A. King


(Photo by Valerie A. King)

Dear Friends:

I would like to give you the opportunity to purchase beautiful art books to assist with the funding of my documentary film representing Burmese refugees who seek asylum on the Thai/Burma border. The book is entitled "Peter Paul Rubens, The Drawings" published by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The books will be on sale at each social hour for $20 each ($60 retail price). I rescued the books from being discarded and was given permission to use the books as I saw fit. I have chosen to sell them so I have the chance to purchase my air fare and video equipment to make the film. The purpose of the film is to help further educate the public to the atrocities committed against the ethnic minorities in Burma and to show where funds can be sent directly to the NGO that feeds, clothes and gives the only medical care to the malnourished, tortured and traumatized refugees who have fled into neighboring Thailand. In the past, I had hoped to write a book but I now feel a film can reach a much wider audience in many different circles of society.

I plan to travel to Thailand in late August to video the refugees themselves within the camps and the medical clinics, along with the Burmese NGO director who needs funding, Dr. Cynthia, a Christian physician who is herself a Burmese refugee, Buddhist monks who escaped the Saffron Revolution and school children who have known no other life than living in makeshift villages that are still attacked daily by the Burmese regime who cross into neighboring Thailand. At the end of the film, the address of the NGO will be given so all who view the film can choose to send funds directly to the NGO.

Thank you for any support you can offer. I am grateful to MCCNY for permitting me the opportunity to sell the art books to help make this film a reality.

With gratitude,

Valerie A. King

Aid to Burma

In the aftermath of the devastating cyclone, Avaaz.org has organized a campaign to raise money for the people of Burma. All donations through Avaaz.org will go to the Burmese monks, one of the most trusted groups in Burma. To make a donation, please visit www.avaaz.org.

Avaaz.org is an online community dedicated to creating "the kind of world most of us would rather live in" through people driven politics and actions.

My Postcard Ministry *by Susan Chilvers*

Do you sometimes get overwhelmed by the number of people in your life who are sick, in trouble, or going through hard times and you have no idea what you can do to help? Prayer of course is very important and has been proven over and over again to make huge changes in people's lives, whether or not they even know they are being prayed for. I have found that in addition to prayer (or actually as a type of prayer) sending postcards to those in need has helped me to feel less helpless in these situations. Several years ago when one of my oldest friends was diagnosed with M.S. and an inoperable tumor, I was devastated and unable to help her as she lived in another state and we were both working with few opportunities to phone each other. I decided to send her a postcard each week.

Then during Lent I sent her a postcard each day as my Lenten discipline. I wrote about things that were happening in my life that would interest her (we had taught together years ago and had kids at the same time), or I just told her about her many qualities that I admired and appreciated or shared a joke or quote I had heard that day. My friend kept all the postcards in a large basket which she showed me when I visited saying that she often pulled one out and re-read it.

After that first Lent I began to include others in my postcard ministry. A postcard is an ideal size because it doesn't take much to fill it up and yet with neat writing one can also say a lot. I collect postcards wherever I go. I know where to buy 20 New York City postcards for $1 and 10 London cards for 1 pound. Friends and family bring me cards from their trips and coffee shops have oodles of free advertising cards that are often funny, colorful and interesting. With cheap or free cards, postage is my only cost and if they would come out with forever stamps for postcards, I'd be set! Also I can write cards at 5 A.M. when I'm awake but wouldn't dream of making a phone call.

I have been told by my postcard recipients that they appreciate getting them. Despite email, I think we all enjoy getting something tangible and personal in the post besides bills and ads. Sometimes I have to start my message with, "No, I'm not in Paris" or "Wish I was here in San Francisco, but I'm not" but it all adds to the fun. If I don't know someone very well (maybe they are on the church prayer list) I simply tell them I am thinking about them and praying for them.

Sadly the friend for whom I started my postcard ministry died last fall. In her last bedridden weeks at home I sent a card a day and her husband said he waited for the mail each day to get my card and read her my latest crazy message. Hopefully my experience might inspire someone else to follow suit. It is a small gesture but it feels good.

MCC New Yorkers March to Stop the H8

by Mel Bryant

MCC New Yorkers joined hundreds of LGBTQ activists to march against the California Supreme Court's decision to let Prop 8 stand and to say to New York State that now is the time for marriage equality in New York on Tuesday, May 26, 2009. The march stepped off from Sheridan Square and ended up in Union Square where speaker after speaker spoke out against the decision in California and called on New York State to make marriage equality a reality for same-sex couples in New York.

Bradley Curry and Mel Bryant spoke on behalf of MCC New York. In their remarks, they said:

As we raced through our vows that day in February, someone from the clerk's office remarked "Rev. Pat. She's determined, that one."

Let us now be that determined.

Determined to say to the California Supreme Court SHAME ON YOU. Shame on you for writing discrimination and now segregation into your constitution.

Shame on you for saying some of us are full human beings and some of us are not.

Let us now be that determined.

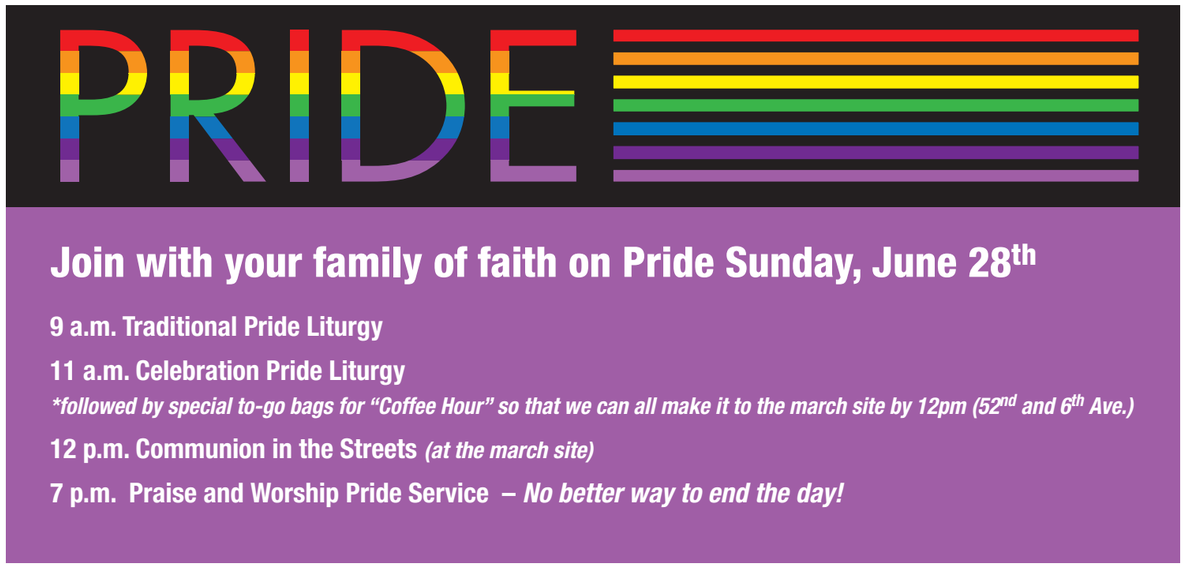
Determined to say to the State of New York. NOW IS THE TIME. Now is the time to recognize all of us as human beings. Full and dignified human beings whose loves and lives matter. Whose relationships, like Bradley's and mine, 11 years this year, matter.

Let us now be that determined.

Determined to not give up the fight that the Reverend Troy Perry, founder of Metropolitan Community Churches, began back in 1970 when he filed the first lawsuit for marriage equality in California.

Let us now be that determined.

Determined to not give up. To not give up until the day when we not only have marriage equality but human equality and dignity.



Metropolitan Community
Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

MCCNY Celebrates Pentecost Sunday

When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a noise came from heaven. It sounded like a strong wind blowing. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.
— Acts 2: 1-2,4

The mighty wind was certainly blowing that last Sunday in May when MCC New York celebrated Pentecost Sunday with special guests and special celebrations, special music and special blessings.

The celebration began when we were blessed to have The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator of the worldwide movement of faith that is Metropolitan Community Churches, preach at the 9 a.m. Traditional Liturgy.

The celebration continued at the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy when MCCNY was honored to welcome Bishop Yvette Flunder to the pulpit. Of Bishop Flunder, The Rev. Edgard Francisco Danielson-Morales wrote;

Rev. Dr. Yvette Flunder serves as Senior Pastor of City of Refuge United Church of Christ in San Francisco; a radically inclusive church she founded in 1991 in order to unite a gospel ministry with a social ministry.

In June 2003, Bishop Flunder was consecrated as Presiding Bishop of The Fellowship, a trans-denominational fellowship of 60+ primarily African-American Christian clergy and laity representing churches and faith-based organizations from all parts of the country and as far away as Africa.

On May 24, 2009, Bishop Flunder received credentials from Metropolitan Community Churches at a ceremony at MCCDC.

Following Bishop Flunder's sermon, The Rev. Steve Parelli, Executive Director of Other Sheep was ordained into the ministry of Metropolitan Community Churches by The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson as part of the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy. On its website, Other Sheep says it "is a multi-cultural ecumenical Christian Ministry that works worldwide for the full inclusion of LGBT people people of faith within their respective faith traditions."

Special music for the celebration was offered by Lynn Loosier and Bishop Joseph Tolton's choir from Rehoboth Temple Christ Consciousness Church. MCC New York's own choir, under the direction of John Fischer, Director of Music, also performed, bringing the congregation to their feet. Thank you to John and all of our musicians for their contribution to the celebration.

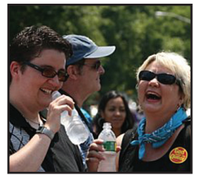
As is our tradition on Pentecost Sunday, the benediction was offered in a variety of languages. Six year old Alexandre Moreira Dumaine, an active member of our Sunday School, offered the final blessing in Portuguese, one of many languages he speaks.

Christians of African Descent and the staff of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry prepared and served an abundant feast for those in attendance.

(Photos by Montel Cherry & Yolanda Holmes)

Reverend Pat Co-Grand Marshall at Queens Pride

WELCOME REV. PAT BUMGARDNER MCCNY — This message greeted the Reverend Pat Bumgardner, Senior Pastor, MCC New York as she was honored by Queens Pride for her work for social justice when she served as co-grand marshall of the Queens Pride March on Sunday, June 7, 2009.



Following a Pride breakfast hosted by Danny Drumm, Queens Pride stepped off where Rev. Pat and members of her congregation marched through the streets of Queens, distributing the iconic "God Made Me __" stickers and greeting the march goers.

As part of the celebration and to honor Rev. Pat, MCC New York's choir had been invited to perform at the afternoon's Pride Rally. The choir, under the direction of John Fischer, MCC New York's Director of Music, offered "Come and Go With Me" and the always popular "If God Were a D.J."

Casey and Mike Easterling and the MCC New York Welcoming Team staffed a table to distribute information about MCC New York.

For those of us in attendance, it filled us with pride as our beloved Pastor was honored on that glorious day.

The Query Quarterly/*Summer 2009*

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MCCNY
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 28 nations. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator

A Pride Message from Rev. Pat Bumgardner:

Jesus said, "Ephphatha," that is, "Be opened." —Mark 7

Dear Friends:

As we approach Pride Sunday this year, we do so under two banners: Heritage of Pride's theme for the city is "Paint the Town Ruby!", while the global Pride theme is "Our Rights, Your Rights, Human Rights." And both, in their own way, pay tribute to the 40th Anniversary of the Stonewall Rebellion.

Most of us know the story, or at least some version of what happened late on the night of June 27th, early on the morning of June 28th, 1969. It has become the legend we live by — how people, once no people, as the hymn says, became God's people; how those who had long gone silently to the slaughter, suddenly stood up for themselves, and in so doing laid a foundation for Queer people around the world to do the same.

Most of us know, it was nine months after the founding of Metropolitan Community Churches — perhaps a time line significant for what would follow: the birth of a Queer rights movement — that people gathering at a small bar in the West Village with names like Jim Fourratt and Portuguese Fisherwoman, Jean DeVente and Spanola Jerry, Sylvia Rivera, Young Timmy, Joey Day and Marsha "Pay-it-no-Mind" Johnson, people in chinos and button down shirts, and people daintily clad in 13dd heels, would finally "come out" for the human rights of Queer people. Perhaps the diversity of that unplanned gathering was a picture of what was to come, as people from all over the globe, from every walk of life, identifying under varying names and orientations would converge to form a movement.

Much like that early band seeking freedom — the people Moses led for 40 years — on the surface, our differences were many. But underneath, whether we see everything exactly the same or agree on political priorities, one thing has always held us together — the same thing that held together all those people fleeing Egypt and seeking their promise in a new land: the firm conviction that we are all of us the beloved Children of God, human beings created in God's image.

That is really the heart of every healing story, every story of liberation in the Bible — the fact that all of us are human beings, created in God's image, and therefore absolutely deserve to be treated with equal dignity and have equal access to all the wholeness and healing life can offer.

"Be opened," is both the call and the promise of the Gospel. It's Jesus' word to people everywhere who want to live in a world where borders are places of welcome cross-over not division and separation; where resources are the things we share and hold in common, not hoarde or fight over. "Be opened" — those are the words that invite us into a future where my rights are your rights, because we are human beings.

They are the words marchers are carrying into the streets of Beirut, crying out for the repeal of Article 534, a law that not only criminalizes our love, but renders that love "unnatural/inhuman."

"Be opened" are the words "Rainbow Flashmobs" released into the skies over 40 Russian cities where Queer people face persecution and intolerance — the words proclaimed by "Rainbow in Motion" bicyclers peddling to seven campuses in Beijing calling for a more "harmonious society."

Who knew, that simply by being open to who we are, nations and governments around the globe could and would be moved to sign a statement saying our rights are human rights? We've seen a life time of miracles in 40 short years, and I believe with all my heart we are just on the edge of more and greater transformations. To me, that's the real significance of this 40th Anniversary — we've looked over into the promised land; we know what is possible; now, it's just about being open to all that future can hold for all of us.

May Jesus' words become both our blessing and our commission: "Be open!"

With love,

Rev. Pat

The QUERY

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Metropolitan Community Church of New York
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(212) 629-7440 • www.mccny.org

Sunday Worship Services at 9am (traditional)
11am (celebration), and 7pm (praise & worship)

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30pm,
Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 85

Letter from the Editor:

Dear Friends and Family,

After a few false starts, we were on our way to the Trans Health Conference in Philadelphia. With Daniel at the wheel and William as the co-pilot, I took a moment to think about those of us in that van and the conference's theme Different Paths...One Journey.

The path that led Daisy and Daisy and Abby and Ryan and Nathalia and Tonia to MCC New York where they have created community.

The path that led Nina and Daniel and Frances to Finishing School where they share their time and talents so freely.

The path that led Chris to the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry where he implemented a program to give our clients choices.

The path that led Miss Veronica Vera to Finishing School where she has become a source of inspiration.

The path that led Christopher to Homeless Youth Services to serve as drop-in coordinator six evenings a week.

The path that led Casey and Mike to form the Brooklyn Small Group to give us yet another opportunity for fellowship.

As we celebrate our Pride this month, let us remember that while our paths may be different, we are all on this one journey called life. Together.

Happy Pride.

Enjoy the issue.

Mel Bryant, Editor

News From The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry *by Chris Stadmeyer, Director*

(Photos by Mel Bryant)

The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry is now officially a Client Choice Pantry. After more than 20 years of handing out prepackaged groceries to needy members of the community, clients of the pantry are now able to choose their groceries in a grocery store style setting. The first official Client Choice distribution was ceremoniously opened with a ribbon cutting ceremony on April 23, 2009. Rev Pat was present to cut the ribbon and bless the transformed space. The response in these first few weeks has been overwhelmingly positive. Initially we were concerned that the Client Choice style would take significantly longer than the old system, but it turns out that our Thursday morning distribution time has not increased and clients do not have to wait any longer than usual and are grateful for the opportunity to choose their groceries.

In addition to changing our distribution model, we've also been able to offer much more fresh produce to our clients. The increased fruits and vegetables have come from two different programs. The first is a program through the Food Bank for NYC. Instead of ordering from Food Bank's warehouse, we are given a line of credit and allowed to order from a private wholesaler, as long as we spend more than 15% of the money on fresh produce. As we near the end of the current contract year, we've been able to spend over 25% of the money on produce, putting hundreds of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables into the homes of food insecure New Yorkers.

Our second source of produce is the Chelsea CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program. We are very happy to be working with the CSA for a second season. The Chelsea CSA operates out of the Hudson Guild Community Center on 26th Street and brings organic vegetables from Stoneledge Farm in the Hudson Valley every Tuesday. At the end of each CSA distribution, our pantry staff comes in and takes all the leftover vegetables back to MCCNY where it is distributed on Thursday mornings.

On a sadder note, this will be my last article for *The Query* as I'm resigning my position as Director. It's been an awesome three years here at MCCNY and I am extremely grateful for the opportunities I have had. I am very proud of the work we do here and all the positive changes that have been taking place within MCCNY/Charities. It has been a great privilege to work with so many people who are so committed to social justice. Best of luck to MCCNY and all your future projects. I will miss you all very much.

Miss Veronica Vera Visits Rev. Pat's Finishing School *by Mel Bryant*

Rev. Pat's Finishing School was thrilled and honored to welcome Miss Veronica Vera to the final session of its third cycle on Thursday, May 28, 2009.

Miss Vera founded her finishing school, *Miss Vera's Finishing School For Boys Who Want To Be Girls*, in 1992. She is the author of *Miss Vera's Finishing School for Boys Who Want To Be Girls* and *Miss Vera's Crossdress for Success*. She has appeared on *The Ricki Lake Show*, *Late Night With Conan O'Brian* and *The View*.

Miss Vera took questions from the girls, many of whom knew her work. One young woman, in particular, was excited to meet Miss Vera because the first book she purchased as she began her journey was *Miss Vera's Finishing School for Boys Who Want To Be Girls*.

Miss Vera spent time sharing her experiences with the girls and taking questions. She ended the evening with a group photo with the girls that she will use for her column in *Transgender Tapestry* magazine.

Rev. Pat's Finishing School To Receive Gift

Thanks to Miss Veronica Vera, Rev. Pat's Finishing School will be receiving a cash gift from Feminists for Freedom of Expression. This gift marks the first cash gift and the largest gift to date for Finishing School.

The gift will be used to purchase Metrocards for participants of Finishing School beginning with the next cycle that kicks off in September, 2009 and to help offset the costs for participants to attend the Trans Health Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

Everyone from Rev. Pat's Finishing School is extremely grateful to Feminists for Freedom of Expression and particularly to Miss Veronica Vera for this generous donation.

News from MCCNY/Homeless Youth Services *by Frances Wood*

New Client IDs Help Keep Sylvia's Place Youth Safe

Scout Evans and Lucky Michaels with new IDs.

Sylvia's Place has improved safety and support for runaway and homeless LGBTQ youth through the implementation of a new comprehensive ID system in April. The ID process puts new Sylvia's Place youth in contact with the MCCNY Homeless Youth Services' social worker and psychiatric nurse practitioner directly upon entering the shelter space. Following these meetings and the approval of the Homeless Youth Services director, youth receive an HYS ID to be worn during shelter hours. Beyond improving communication between youth and HYS staff, the ID process has also had an immediate impact on HYS safety. Staff report fewer incidences within the shelter space, making it easier for youth to feel secure when accessing services and continuing their critical work towards self-sufficiency. Over 100 youth have completed the ID process to date.

HYS Welcomes New Drop-In Coordinator

Homeless Youth Services drop-in hours draw over 50 youth each night who access over 20 workshops and scheduled services per week. Harmonizing these programs and ensuring that youth receive the services they need requires careful oversight and dedication to the mission of Homeless Youth Services. MCCNY Charities is pleased to welcome Christopher Collazo *(above)*, the new Drop-In Coordinator for MCCNY Homeless Youth Services. Christopher brings a wealth of experience to this position, having served as an HIV/AIDS Case Manager at Heritage Community of Care Project prior to joining the MCCNY Charities staff. Congratulations to Christopher, and welcome to the newest member of the MCCNY staff.

MCCNY Charities Builds Community at Trans Health Conference *by Frances Wood*

For three days in June, downtown Philadelphia became a site of education, affirmation and community for representatives of MCCNY Charities. A total of seven delegates from Homeless Youth Services and Rev. Pat's Finishing School joined with MCCNY Charities staff to attend the 8th Annual Philadelphia Trans-Health Conference, a national event that brings together people of trans experience, their families, allies and service providers to acknowledge the needs and successes of transgender individuals and communities.

Representatives of MCCNY spent the day attending discussions, film screenings and workshops from "Trans Embodiments as Spiritual Practice" to "Hormone Options for Trans Men" and spent evenings sharing what they had learned with other members of the MCCNY group.

"It was my first conference and I loved it," said Daisy La'Telle, youth representative from Sylvia's Place. "I got to express myself, make new friends, and get good information about my health as a trans woman."

Finishing School Director Mel Bryant was invited to sit on a panel for "Counseling Transgender Folks in Religious/Spiritual Communities:" part of a new programmatic emphasis on spirituality introduced at this year's conference.

"The Trans Health Conference was a great opportunity to connect with some fantastic people," said Mel Bryant. "The representatives of MCCNY also used this time to bond with one another and get to know each other better. I am really grateful to everyone who made this weekend such a success."

(photos by William Moran-Berberena)

News from Binghamton

The Rev. Miller Hoffman, Staff Pastor for MCC New York's Binghamton congregation was invited to speak at the raising of the Pride flag in Binghamton New York. During the ceremony, Rev. Miller said:

On behalf of the Binghamton Pride Coalition, thanks to everyone who is here today. For the Pride shown both by our lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer communities and the Pride of our allies. This is a day for Pride and a day for support. A day to witness one another's acts of friendship and resistence. It's a day to recognize our need for each other.

We need you.

We need each other. We need you, and you need us. Dr. King said that none of us are free until we are all free, and as the world becomes safer for lesbians, gay men, bisexual and trans and queer folk, the world becomes safer for everyone to live outside the code of imposed and compulsory gender and sexuality: safer for straight "sensitive" men and strong, vocal women, safer for masculinity and femininity and love to melt all over the spectrum of humanity.

Peace.

MCC New York Walks To Fight AIDS *by Casey Easterling*

On Sunday, May 17, 2009, a group of 25 individuals from Metropolitan Community Church of New York gathered in Central Park for the 23rd annual AIDS Walk New York. Team members met under the balloon-covered MCCNY banner for juice and donuts provided by the MCCNY Welcoming Team before setting off on the 5K walk in and around the park. Many MCCNY walkers donned "God Made Me Queer" shirts to show their MCCNY and LGBTQ pride. The Welcoming Team also provided the walkers with red ribbons to show their solidarity with people living with HIV/AIDS as well as rainbow-colored necklaces to add to the festive atmosphere.

Thirty-five MCCNYers, family and friends joined the MCCNY team, surpassing our initial goal of 25 people. Each registered participant asked family members, friends and acquaintances to sponsor them for the Walk with all money raised benefitting the Gay Men's Health Crisis (GMHC), the world's oldest HIV/AIDS organization. GMHC is dedicated to ending the AIDS epidemic and uplifting the lives of all those who are affected in New York City.

Thanks to the remarkable efforts and care, individuals on the MCCNY team raised $3,255, qualifying the team to be named a Fundraising Excellence Team by AIDS Walk New York and beating its own goal of $1000. This award recognizes the 601 teams that raised $1,000 or more during this year's Walk. MCCNY is currently in 208th place for fundraising out of 2,885 registered team.

Thank you to all of the walkers and financial supporters for the success of this year's AIDS Walk.

(photos by Casey Easterling)

The Brooklyn Small Group *by Casey Easterling*

The Welcoming Team members at the Metropolitan Community Church of New York, Casey Easterling, Mike Easterling, Tressie Carter and Angel Martinez, share a vision of helping to make MCCNY, a large church with almost 500 members, feel like a small church by creating and deepening relationships among the members, regular attendees and visitors at MCCNY.

Author and theologian, J.I. Packer stated, "The church will flourish only when there is fellowship." One way the Welcoming Team is working to accomplish this important goal is through the launch of the Brooklyn Small Group, the newest of the MCCNY affinity groups. Small Groups provide valuable opportunities for fellowship and relationship building within the church because the small group environment encourages individuals to talk more freely than they might in a larger setting. Participants are also able to develop friendships by connecting with those with similar interests.

The first Brooklyn Small Group, so named because the group meets monthly in various locations around Brooklyn, met at Rev. Boon Lin Ngeo's home in November, 2008 for a multicultural pot luck dinner. Since then, we have had a bowling night, a Christmas cookie social and and many opportunities just to share a meal, the most recent being May, 2009, when 12 MCCNYers gathered at Mike and Casey Easterling's home for a Vegetarian Cookout. The afternoon featured delicious food and enriching conversation on a balcony overlooking the beautiful Manhattan skyline.

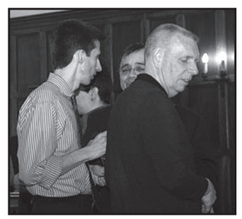
On Saturday, June 27, 2009 at 2 p.m., the Brooklyn Small Group will be hosting a Pot Luck at Prospect Park near the Picnic House and everyone is invited to attend. Please bring a covered dish or a beverage to share, if you are able. On Saturday, July 26, 2009 the Brooklyn Small Group will meet at the Wonder Wheel in Coney Island at 4 p.m. for an afternoon of fun before going to watch the Brooklyn Cyclones play the Staten Island Yankees at Keyspan Park at 6 p.m. Tickets are $8, but the Welcoming Team is offering them for $5 for anyone who buys tickets before July 19, 2009.

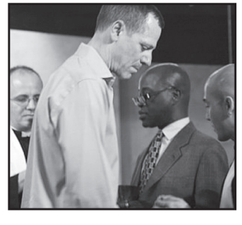
If you would like more information about the Brooklyn Small Group or the MCCNY Welcoming Team, or if you have an idea of a Small Group you would like to start, please email welcomingteam@mccny.org. The Brooklyn Small Group and all Welcoming Team activities are always open to everyone!

(photo courtesy of Casey Easterling)

Welcoming Team members (from left) Mike Easterling, Angel Martinez, Casey Easterling and Tressie Carter.

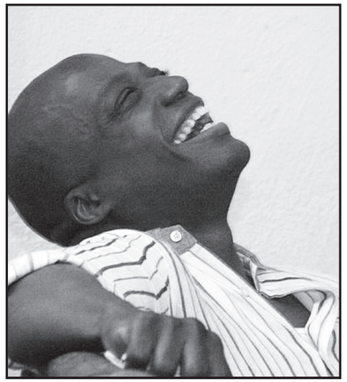
Easter





Celebrating the Ministry of David Raleigh

by Ted Walner



(photo by Montel Cherry)

On Sunday, June 14, 2009 the Congregation and the Clergy of MCCNY celebrated the ministry of David Raleigh, the 11 a.m. accompanist and former Director of Music during the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy.

To kick off the celebration, the choir performed a special arrangement of "In Jesus' Name," a song David had written. The arrangement, by John Fischer, MCCNY's Director of Music, featured solos by The Rev. Franc Perry, Eric James, Denise Rosner, Rick Libert, Andy Buck and Amy Smidebush as surprises for David.

The Rev. Pat Bumgardner, Senior Pastor, MCCNY presented David with an Elsa Paretti heart from Tiffany's to thank him for his years of service to MCCNY's music ministry. The surprises kept coming after special music when John Fischer announced "We're not done yet" and Carolyn Eufrasio sang David's favorite song, "You've Got A Friend."

David became involved with the Church in 1995 after being intrigued by the MCCNY float at the Gay Pride Parade. His service began as a substitute pianist before he became the accompanist for the 7 p.m. service. He also got involved in special events such as the Easter banquet and benefit concerts and he performed at other celebrations such as weddings and funerals.

In 2001, David brought on John Fischer as a substitute accompanist. Today, John is the Director of Music.

David has truly been an inspiration to the Church and while his international touring schedule is too hectic for him to be with us every week, we look forward to those Sundays when David is back with us as a special musician.

Good luck and Godspeed David! We will see you at Church for sure and we wish you the best in your endeavors.

MCCNY Retreat

by Rev. Edgard Francisco Danielsen-Morales

(photo by Casey Easterling)

On the last weekend of April, eighteen friends and members of MCCNY gathered for a weekend of spiritual insight, fellowship, and communion with God and nature. The spiritual retreat was held at the Kirkridge Center, located in eastern Pennsylvania.

The theme of the retreat was "The Doors of Our Lives" and the program followed, in a fluid way, the movements of "knocking on the door, opening the door, standing on the threshold, closing the door, and beyond the door" and was based on the book *Open the Door* by Joyce Rupp.

We explored the different movements using a wide range of activities: from video clips to music; from walks to "body prayer"; from community meals to group discussions; from movie night to reflections on the spiritual life; from fun times to times of silence.

These are some of the comments the participants shared:

"I left the retreat ready with a painful door closed and a wonderful new door open. Thank you MCC."

"Thanks for giving us such an opportunity for spiritual rest. The bonding and time for reflection is so important, and we don't seem to have enough time for it unless we go on something like this."

"It was a real blessing to share and to hear where others were on [their journeys]. I received a fresh perspective on 'the door.'"

"The social times and fun times were low-key and relaxed which I liked and appreciated."

"A nice group of people - I enjoyed getting to know everyone a little better in such a relaxed setting."

"I loved the hike and the lake as well as the small chapel. Oh and the [Labyrinth] we walked that seemed endless."

(Photos by Montel Cherry & Yolanda Holmes)

Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon: Season Three *by Mel Bryant*

Art by Olan

Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon returns to MCC New York for its third season with opening night on Friday, October 9, 2009 at 7 p.m. Join Sybil, Gefil and the rest of the cast for all of the outrageousness and hilarity that can only be Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon.

Make your reservation now for opening night, Friday, October 9, 2009 by emailing Bradley at bradley@mccny.org or calling the church office at 212-629-7440. The complete list of dates for season three is below.

Friday, October 9, 2009	Friday, January 8, 2010	Friday, April 9, 2010
Friday, November 6, 2009	Friday, February 5, 2010	Friday, May 7, 2010
Friday, December 4, 2009	Friday, March 5, 2010	Friday, June 4, 2010

Admission is $20 with all of the proceeds going to the good work of MCCNY/Charities so join us for the fun raising and fundraising Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon.

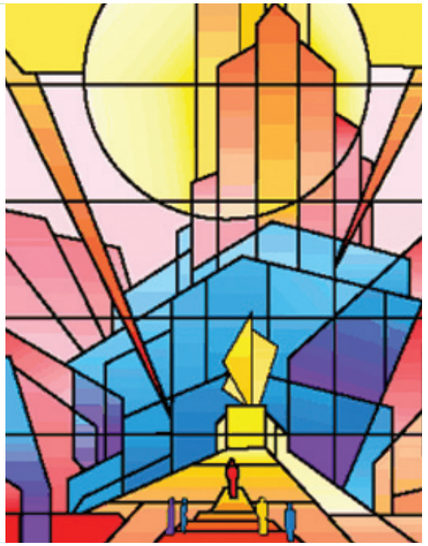
As always, doors open at 6 p.m. and the show starts at 7 so make your reservations now for Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon.

Come Home to MCCNY!

Homecoming Sunday is September 20, 2009.

9 a.m. Traditional Liturgy
11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy
7 p.m. Praise and Worship Liturgy

Gala receptions following all services!



Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 West 36th Street
New York, NY 10018

The Global Justice Work of Metropolitan Community Churches

The Reverend Pat Bumgardner, Chair of the Moderator's Global Justice Team, and the Reverend Boon Lin Ngeo traveled to Asia once again to continue the global justice work of Metropolitan Community Churches, meeting with community leaders in Beijing, Shang Hai, Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur and Pakistan.

This trip marked the first time there had been an MCC presence in Beijing. Beijing does have a Lesbian and Gay Center where both Reverend Pat and Reverend Boon spoke. Reverend Pat shared that while gays and lesbians can be out in China, they cannot expect any sort of social change.

After speaking in Beijing, they traveled to Shang Hai where they met with an existing group of 30 gay Christians, led by a young man named Paul. This group, the Same Grace Fellowship, is now a parish extension of MCC New York. The goal, Reverend Pat shared, is that the Same Grace Fellowship will become its own Metropolitan Community Church and therefore be the founding MCC in China.

From Shang Hai, Reverend Pat and Reverend Boon went to Hong Kong where they met with the "Blessed Minority," a group of Gay Christians, and Reverend Boon preached. While in Hong Kong, Reverend Pat gave a radio interview about MCC New York and the work of the Global Justice team. They also met with a group of open and affirming pastors, including the Reverend Rose Wu, a published author and respected theologian.

From Hong Kong, they returned for the fourth year to Kuala Lumpur where they went on a four day retreat with members of our parish extension there, the Good Samaritan MCC New York. This congregation now has its own worship space in a section of Kuala Lumpur known as "Mihorja" which translates "beautiful people." It is Kuala Lumpur's "gay neighborhood" where many members of their LGBTQ community live and own businesses. It is Reverend Pat's hope that this congregation's new space in Mihorja becomes Kuala Lumpur's LGBTQ Community Center.

Following Kuala Lumpur, Reverend Pat traveled to Pakistan where she reconnected with lesbian, gay and transgender groups she had met last year. Reverend Pat shared that in one of the lesbian groups, there were lesbians as young as 12. MCC New York will now serve as the fiscal conduit for the Lesbian Education Project in Pakistan. This project will begin with scholarships to three lesbians in Pakistan so they can access job training in order to live independently.

Members of MCC New York have expressed interest in traveling with Reverend Pat and Reverend Boon as part of the Global Justice team next year. If you would be interested in traveling, please contact Reverend Pat.

Reverend Pat's passion and commitment to the work of Global Justice was evident as she shared her three fold hope for the continued work in Asia. First, it is her prayerful hope that Metropolitan Community Churches can sustain the work of the Lesbian Education Project in Pakistan and that lesbians from within the denomination will support this work through a sister to sister relationship. Secondly, she hopes to create a similar project for our trans siblings in Bagria, Pakistan and thirdly, she hopes to hold a retreat and bring all of the groups she and Reverend Boon have worked with together so they can be "out" with each other.

(photos courtesy of Rev. Boon Lin Ngeo)

(photos courtesy of Rev. Pat Bumgardner)

The Query Quarterly/*Fall 2009*

446 West 36th Street | New York, NY 10018 | Phone: (212) 629-7440 | info@mccny.org | www.mccny.org

MCCNY
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 28 nations. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator

A Homecoming Message from Rev. Pat Bumgardner:

Homecoming 2009

Dear friends:

Sometimes you don't know what you have until you don't have it. — It was my great privilege and blessing to travel on behalf of Global Justice recently, and to meet with many people who long simply for the opportunity to meet together safely to worship. I have long loved MCC and MCCNY in particular. My travels have deepened my gratitude for what MCC is all about.

We have so much here — a safe space to worship in; the kind of generosity of spirit necessary to share resources, and house and mentor young people; dedicated volunteers and staff who work very, very hard to make sure kids get to see doctors and Sunday attendees are both graciously welcomed and sumptously fed.

We have top notch Bible Study and religious education classes, with teachers and facilitators who are themselves gifted and studied theologians. We are blessed to offer things that no other church offers — like Finishing School and GenderPeople.

We are all safe here and cared about; well fed in body, mind and spirit — as well as challenged to the cores of our beings with living into the Gospel promise.

There is so much to be grateful for!

Jesus will say in the lesson for Homecoming Sunday taken from St. Mark's Gospel, "My family are those who hear the Word of God and do it."

I think I know what he meant now, in a very personal way. And, thanks to the vision and spiritual generosity of many here at MCCNY, a growing number of lesbians, gay men, bisexual and transgender people, as well as our allies, are coming to know what he meant, too — in places as far removed as Bagria, Pakistan and Shanghai, China.

Jesus will say in another passage that from those with much, much will be required. — Part of what makes MCCNY so special to me is that we feed and care for each other, and for many more of our family members around the globe, not as a requirement, but as our great joy and blessing and privilege. — I don't know how to communicate the astounding growth and change you, MCCNYers, are supporting all over the globe, except to say that because of you and the work you enable, Queer people in parts of the world where freedoms are not easily come by, will at least be able to celebrate the glorious freedom of the children of God; because of you, people who thought their lives would always be lived in the shadows are out, proud, happy and are building active communities of faith. Because you heard the Word of God and put it into practice, we have family around the globe who will celebrate with us on Homecoming Sunday.

MCCNY is a house of prayer for all people — in New York City and Shanghai, China and Lahore and Bagria, Pakistan and Kuala Lumpur, Pakistan — because you heard the Word of God and put it into action. And for that I give thanks this Homecoming Sunday.

I hope you will join me in gratitude and thanksgiving on September 20th at 9am, 11am, 7pm — or all three! — as we celebrate the family that simply living what we believe has made possible.

With love,

Rev. Pat

The QUERY

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Metropolitan Community Church of New York
446 W. 36th St., New York, NY 10018
(212) 629-7440 • www.mccny.org

Sunday Worship Services at 9am (traditional)
11am (celebration), and 7pm (praise & worship)

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30pm,
Time Warner channel 57, RCN channel 85

Letter from the Editor:

At our most recent Finishing School Planning Committee meeting, the conversation turned to what is possible.

It is possible, thanks to Dani and Violet and Sky and LP69, that we can continue to upgrade our social services space.

It is possible, thanks to Joshua, that we can hold an open and honest dialogue about meth and its effect on our community.

It is possible, thanks to Lucky and Frances, that the young people from Sylvia's Place can participate in a very traditional summertime activity by going to camp.

It is possible, thanks to the United Way and the CSA/Hudson Guild and Deacon Jen, that clients of the Sylvia Rivera Food pantry can access fresh fruits and vegetables.

It is possible, thanks to Sybil and the cast and crew of Church Lady Bingo starring Sybil Bruncheon, that we can raise funds by raising fun.

It is possible, thanks to Reverend Edgard and Tim and Earl, that we can speak out for what is just and right.

It is possible, thanks to Reverend Pat and Reverend Boon and the Global Justice Team, that young women in Pakistan can access education and that LGBTQ Christians around the world can hear the Good News of God's inclusive love.

As we celebrate Homecoming on Sunday, September 20, 2009 come home to MCC New York and experience all that is possible through God.

Enjoy the issue.

Mel Bryant, Editor

News From The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry *by Mel Bryant, Director*

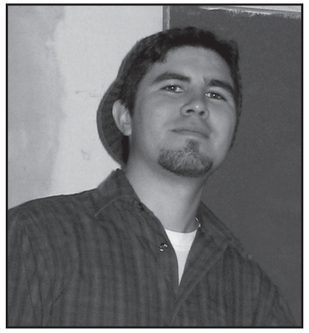
MCC New York and the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry celebrated Chris Stadmeyer's years of service to the pantry on Sunday, June 21, 2009 during the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy. Chris resigned from his position as Director on June 26, 2009 to pursue other interests.

Chris began his service to the pantry in 2006 as an AmeriCorp VISTA intern. He then served as the assistant director from August, 2007 until March, 2008 when he was promoted to Director. Under his leadership, the pantry rolled out a Client Choice model for pantries for both the Ryan White/PWA pantry and Thursday morning general pantry, established our relationship with the CSA/Hudson Guild to provide fresh, organic vegetables to our clients every week, enhanced our volunteer program, increased funding through the Snack Bag Campaign and the Renew Reusable Bag Campaign and increased awareness of the pantry's work through his regular contribution to *The Query*.

(photo by Bradley Curry)

Sarah Wilson hard at work stocking the Ryan White Pantry.

(photo by Nicole Losavio)



Thank you, Chris, for your service to the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry.

Thank you, Chris, for your service to the pantry. We miss you.

The CSA/Hudson Guild continues to donate organically grown produce to the pantry each week. Thank you, Deacon Jen, for volunteering to collect the vegetables each week this summer.

The United Way of New York recently presented the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry with a Certificate of Excellence for using 15% of its HPNAP funding for fresh produce for clients during its 2008-2009 contract year. All too often, fresh produce is something that is not available to food unstable households, but thanks to the CSA/Hudson Guild and the United Way, we are able to provide our clients with fresh produce every week.

The pantry was blessed to have Sarah Wilson, our former AmeriCorp intern, return for the summer. Sarah, who is in graduate school pursuing her Master's Degree in Social Work at Hunter College, was a tremendous help to us as we underwent a transition in leadership. Thank you, Sarah, for all of your hard work and dedication to the work of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry.

The Fall and the holidays are busy times for the pantry so if you would like to volunteer or make a donation, please contact us at 212-629-7440 ext 225 or email us at mel@mccny.org.

Interesting pantry fact: Did you know that volunteers from the Young Adults Institute (YAI) come in three days a week to make snack bags and stock groceries?

In Service to MCC New York *by Mel Bryant*

MCC New York's Hospitality Team recently completed its first three months of service. The team is responsible for the set up and clean up of the social hours that follow each service and for greeting congregants and visitors as they enter the sanctuary for worship. The members of the team are Daniel Schnorbus, Tressie Carter, Ed Ballo, Ed Gonzalez, John Normile, Shawn Wilson, Jen Crosson, Scout Evans, Norma Sharp, Pio Cabada and Monte Clark. If you would be interested in joining the hospitality team, please contact Bradley Curry or Mel Bryant at 212-629-7440.

(photo by Mel Bryant)

A social hour feast prepared by a member of the hospitality team.

(photo by Frances Wood)

John Garrett was celebrated on Sunday, August 23, 2009 during the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy for his 10 years of service to MCC New York as sexton. Reverend Pat praised John for his dedication and faithfulness and presented him with an Elsa Peretti heart from Tiffany's to show the church's appreciation for his service.

Although John cannot worship with us on most Sundays because of his work schedule, he regularly follows the worship service through public access cable where the services are aired every Sunday at 1:30 p.m. on Time Warner channel 57.

For sharing his heart for 10 years, Rev. Pat (left) presented John Garrett (center) with an Elsa Peretti heart as Rev. Edgard (right) looks on.

News from MCCNY/Charities *by Frances Wood*

Charities Welcomes New HYS Social Worker

MCCNY Charities is pleased to introduce James Vining *(at right)*, who has joined the MCCNY Charities team as the new Homeless Youth Services social worker. A Brooklyn native, James has experience working with a variety of populations, including the developmentally and physically disabled, visually impaired teenagers, New York public school students, and LGBT identified youth. He received his MSW in August 2009 from the Hunter College School of Social Work.

Queer Spirit Camp Offers Sylvia's Place Youth "A Week Away"

In late July, homeless youth services director Lucky Michaels and client service assistant Kristen Lovell embarked on a journey with nine Sylvia's place residents to Easton Mountain to enjoy a fun-filled week at Queer Spirit Camp. Residents had the opportunity to engage themselves in various activities such as tubing and hiking trips. Many workshops were presented at QSC to empower youth to become one with themselves and comfortable in their community through peer leadership and motivation. Obcecion Nickerson had this to say about QSC: "My experience was very memorable. I had so much fun! I even climbed a mountain!"

Director Lucky Michaels led a troop of young people through the trails of Easton Mountain all the way up to the peak Obcecion recalls so vividly. Said Obcecion, "It's something I wouldn't have been able to do anywhere else." Lucky also facilitated three workshops dealing with issues facing our youth, including HIV, activism, and safer sex.

The goal of Easton Mountain is to form a queer family no matter where you come from or how you live.

Kristen Lovell had this to say: "Seeing our young people out of the everyday environment brings something else out of them. It was a week away from the everyday woes of city life. Maybe sometimes all we need is a week away from it all."

Leadership Volunteers Commandeer Charities' Fast-Paced Face Lift

A whirlwind of sanding and painting, cleaning and repairing left the MCCNY social services space several shades brighter and much more welcoming thanks to the work of Leadership Program 69: a group of aspiring leaders dedicated to changing the face of non-profits for the benefit of the communities they serve.

(photo by Frances Wood)

LP69 members were given one week to identify a non-profit in need; design a sustainable project to improve services at the organization; and to complete the project with the help of community volunteers and donations. The goal, said LP69 members, was to ensure that those entering the space would "know that there is power in their most vulnerable moments, and that they are loved and supported by their community."

Volunteers spent the week refurbishing youth storage cubbies, painting the shelter space a new shade of pink, securing donations of food and supplies from new community partners, and fixing equipment including the kitchen sink.

The renovations culminated in a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Sunday, August 23rd (*pictured at left)*, which was attended by HYS youth, staff, volunteers and members of the MCCNY congregation. LP69 members shared their personal experiences of working on the project and pledged their dedication to future collaboration with MCCNY Charities.

"We are grateful to LP69 for identifying the need here and working hard to see that the social services space is more inviting for the community we serve," said Charities Executive Director William Morán-Berberena. *"We value working with LP69 through this partnership in the future."*

Familiar Face Brings New Insight to The Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry

MCCNY Charities is proud to announce that Mel Bryant has been named the new director of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry.

A familiar face who brings a wealth of new insight and experience to the position, Mel has already begun to enact improvements to the pantry program since taking on the position in July, with a focus on securing new sources of funding, improving program efficiency and expanding community outreach.

Mel joined the Charities in March 2008 as the assistant director of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry. A longtime MCCNY deacon, Mel additionally serves as the volunteer director of Rev. Pat's Finishing School. Mel's extensive background within the MCCNY and Charities community makes him uniquely suited to planning for the growth and development of the pantry program.

"We are really excited about the future of the Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry as we continue to improve and to increase our service to the communities we serve," said Mel. *"Besides improved nutrition options for our clients, we plan to add new and varied services to our existing food programs. I'm really grateful to everyone who has helped make the transition so smooth."*

(photo by William Morán-Berberena)

MCC New Yorkers Speak Out for Social Justice *by Mel Bryant*

The Reverend Edgard Francisco Danielsen-Morales, Assistant Pastor for Congregational Life, joined other religious and community leaders when he represented MCC New York at the "Interfaith Coalition for HIV/AIDS: A Call to Action in 2009" rally on Wednesday, July 8, 2009 on the steps of City Hall *(pictured below)*.

In his remarks, Reverend Edgard said:

"When we remember the stories of our loved ones who have died of AIDS, we become hopeful, and the desire for justice ignites inside of us.

HIV/AIDS is not something that only community organizations talk about or the government talks about. We have to stick together...work together, because this crosses racial, ethnic, economic and religious boundaries."

The rally was the kick off for a five day forum to unite spiritual and community organizations in the ongoing fight against HIV/AIDS. The theme of the forum was "Stepping Up in Faith for HIV and AIDS."

(photo courtesy of NYC Faith in Action for HIV & AIDS Coalition)

On Wednesday, July 8, 2009, Tim Hare and the Reverend Earl Ball spoke at the Pennsylvania State Capitol Rotunda as marriage equality legislation was being introduced in that state's legislature *(pictured at right)*. Tim and Earl are members of the 11 a.m. congregation and travel from their home in Easton, Pennsylvania every Sunday to worship. They have been in love for more than 32 years.

From the steps of the capitol, Earl said:

"We need what heterosexual couples have:

We need the automatic right to make medical decisions for one another. We need access to health insurance through our employers. We need to be able to bequeath our shared home and assets to the survivor without the crippling taxes that all heterosexual couples are exempt from. We need sick and bereavement leave. We need the right to file a wrongful death claim. We need the ability to claim the survivor's Social Security when one of us is gone.

The list goes on and on and on – it would stretch out this door and down the steps and into the street and how far across Harrisburg!

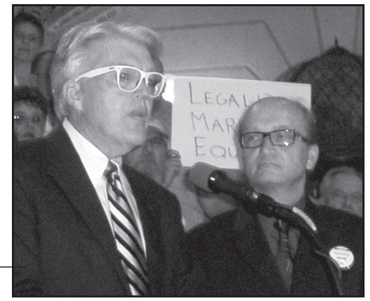
Yes, marriage is a personal commitment but marriage is also a civil bond between a loving couple and their government.

Civil Marriage is the only guarantee of a vast array of protections and benefits. Most of those protections cannot be replicated in any other way regardless of how much money Tim and I have spent on attorney's fees assembling documents to try to protect us. Civil marriage is a civil right, a human right, and our birthright as Americans and Pennsylvanians. Prejudice and discrimination against us are the true enemies to the Commonwealth – not a loving marriage.

Outside the bronze doors of this magnificent rotunda, carved boldly into marble walls are the visionary words of Benjamin Franklin, "Where liberty dwells, there is my country."

Today liberty dwells in this rotunda.

We pray that someday soon, liberty for us to marry in Pennsylvania will dwell throughout the Commonwealth - where American liberty began in 1776."



(photo courtesy of Tim Hare and Earl Ball)

(photo by Chuck Dickman)

In response to two separate attacks on trans women in Queens, community organizers held an anti-violence rally on Sunday, July 26, 2009 on the steps of the Jackson Heights post office. Deacon Mel Bryant spoke on behalf of MCC New York *(pictured at right)*.

"I don't understand hate. I don't understand violence. I certainly don't understand what can be in the hearts of anyone who would willfully, purposely bring pain and suffering to any of their siblings in Christ.

"What I do understand is that we are who we are by the grace and design of God and that God's inclusive and eternal love is available to all of us. So on behalf of MCC New York and the Reverend Pat Bumgardner, to our trans siblings, I say, thank you. Thank you for living your lives openly and honestly. Thank you for living your lives being true to who you are. May God continue to bless us all."

neighbors defend neighbors *by Rev. Miller Hoffman*

Leslie Feinberg turned 60 so a group of us from Binghamton MCCNY drove to ArtRage in Syracuse to "celebrate a life of love and struggle." It was easy to see the love from those who had traveled from as far as NYC and even other states to be with Leslie: people spoke with passion and affection and talked about how a room grew noticeably warmer when Leslie entered it. And it was easy to see Leslie's love for us: every one of the photographs on the wall, taken by Leslie and installed for the event by Minnie Bruce Pratt and friends, documented and reflected the lives of people Leslie has, for decades, fought beside and fought for. Immigrants, workers, queer, genderqueer, disabled. Leslie's love for each subject showed in the camera's embrace.

One series seemed to particularly illustrate the life and work of Leslie Feinberg. Titled "neighbors defend neighbors," it showed people carrying signs and picketing as allies. Leslie's community is similarly a people who come together in solidarity and a people who come together to work.

Leslie is very sick and the undiagnosed illness has taken a visible toll on his body. But through the internet and digital archiving, Leslie continues to find ways to remain in the struggle and, like e. e. cummings, to find a yes. As one speaker noted, no matter how much of his body fails, Leslie's heart remains strong. Happy birthday, Leslie Feinberg, and many returns. The world is a better place because of your life.

Deconstructing Meth with Joshua Love

Joshua Love, Director of Metropolitan Community Churches' Global HIV/AIDS Ministry and MCC's Drug and Addiction Ministry, facilitated "Deconstructing Meth: An Experiential Workshop to Open Honest Dialogue About Meth" at MCC New York on Saturday, August 29, 2009 and Sunday, August 30, 2009.

The workshops, funded in part by the Elton John AIDS Foundation, are Metropolitan Community Church's response to the growing use of crystal meth among the LGBTQ community.

Love, a national expert on sexual health and HIV prevention, says of the workshop, "Deconstructing Meth is an opportunity for growth, inquiry, and sharing in a safe and supportive environment." He adds, "This is not a meth recovery program, but we will explore avenues for accessing treatment services in New York, and participants will be encouraged to pool their own knowledge of local resources."

He goes on to say, "Crystal meth knows no boundaries. Its impact cuts across all lines of human difference: age, race, gender, sexual identity, nationality, social circumstance, and economic condition. Much like the global spread of HIV infection, meth affects all people, whether they realize it or not."

Between the two days, more than 20 MCC New Yorkers participated in the workshops that are also being offered in Washington, DC, Minneapolis, Toronto, the San Francisco Bay Area, Denver, and Los Angeles.

As part of his time in New York, Joshua, who is completing his Master of Divinity at Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA, co-celebrated Holy Communion at the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy.

(photo by Lucky Michaels)

Joshua Love consecrating Holy Communion during the 11 a.m. Celebration Liturgy on Sunday, August 30, 2009.

Remembering Mark Damiani January 31, 1956 - July 1, 2009

MCC New York was very saddened by the sudden and unexpected passing of Mark Damiani on July 1, 2009. Mark and his life partner, John Miskell were active members of the congregation and our condolences go out to John.

In a note to John, Joe Kennedy wrote this about Mark:

"I will always remember so fondly the many years that Mark and you marched (in the MCCNY contingent) in the inclusive St. Patrick's Parade in Queens. Mark was so happy and so playful and very much the joy of our contingent at those parades! And I know that those parades were just a few of the many demonstrations for social justice and world peace that Mark and you faithfully participated in over the years."

Joe went on to say:

"Of course, everyone at parades (especially little ones like that) likes to get their picture in *The Query*, so it was also memorable and typical of Mark's thoughtfulness of others that year after year, he would generously offer to take the picture so that everyone else would get their publicity props in *The Query* while he remained unseen."

Reverend Pat also remembered Mark's playfulness. At the celebration of his life she shared this:

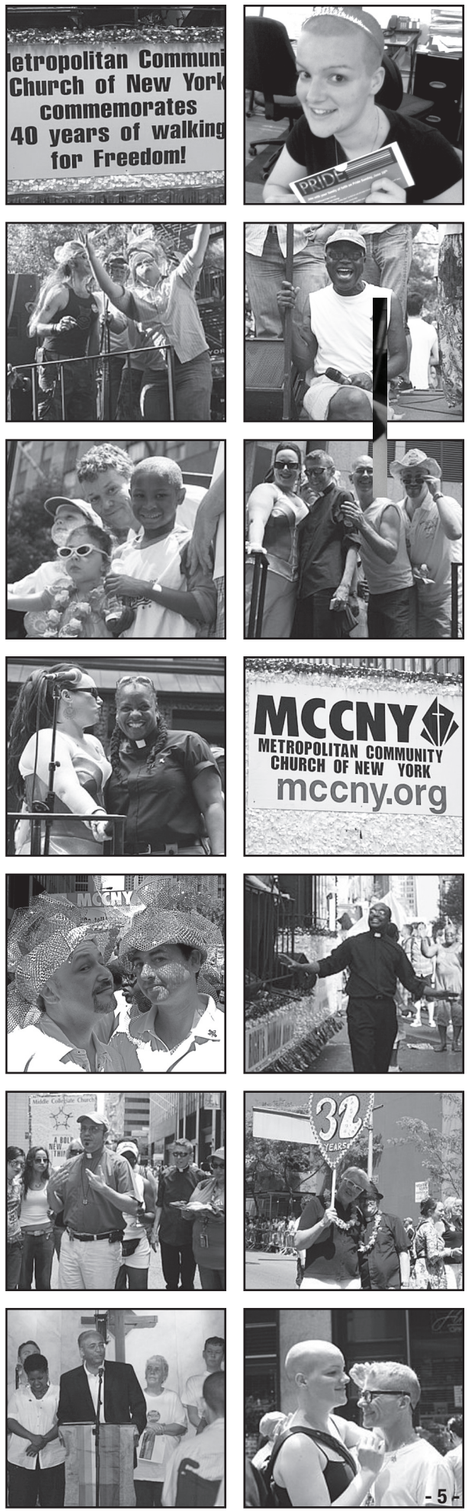
"...there was also another, very playful side to him – I'm sure you saw it. When I first met him, he wouldn't tell me his last name...he wanted me to guess! So he'd give me all these clues: it sounds like a mob name or go to the church at this location and look for a statue of a saint – we share a name. It took me forever – but it was fun, child-like, in the best sense of the word.

"In St. Matthew's 18th chapter, Jesus will say, "Unless you become like a child – you will never enter the Reign of Heaven." I think some of it was Jesus' way of saying it's not how high we climb or the degree of worldly recognition we achieve but rather...the meaning of life...eternally...is about how far we can bend and how able we are to see ourselves in the lives and dreams of others – and help those dreams come true.

"Mark was a playful, loving, endearing man...who helped other people's dreams and wishes come true. And so, as we commend his Spirit one last time, I really hope you'll take a part of him with you – and keep his gifts alive among us."

He is missed.

PRIDE



(Photos by Montel Cherry, Yolanda Holmes & Sam duBel)

Voices Ringing Together

by John Fischer

Recently, through Facebook, a member of the MCCNY congregation issued a challenge to the 11 a.m. choir: "Earth, Wind and Fire this Sunday?!?!?!" Prompted by the death of the great Maurice White, the founder of Earth, Wind and Fire, this helpful (and completely lovely) church member even suggested the song for us: "Fantasy." It was late Friday afternoon, a day and a half before Sunday morning services.

Challenges like this are the things that make me love my job. Here is my chance to work with a team of singers and musicians so wonderfully diverse in their talents—and so fearless about trying new things—that we never get bored. Our rehearsals are short and intense: from 10–11 a.m. on Sundays (8:15–9 for the 9 a.m. choir), and that's about it. We do our best to reflect the radically inclusive message of this church, that God works for good in all things—all languages, all instruments, all vocal types, and all genres of music.

I was taught early that there is a secular/sacred divide in music, but I've never been able to accept that. Music is (mostly) all good, and when it isn't quite right, well, a little rewrite never hurt anybody. We've performed Prince and Pachelbel, gospel music and salsa, rock, punk, Bach, jazz, Radiohead, musical theater, '70s soul, spirituals, hymns, masses and hip-hop. We sing in English, Latin, Spanish, French, German, Italian, Russian (a little), Arabic (ok, one of us does), and Icelandic (another one of us), and we're always learning more.

My first experience leading the choir at the morning service was a total bomb. It was October 2001, a challenging time to choose music for a New York City church service. I opted for a hymn, something simple and direct, and apparently familiar to me and me alone. I had recently become the music director for the evening service, and was working to build a small choir from scratch there. For the evening service I was able to enlist the help of my friend Carolyn Traore and things were growing, but the choir at the morning service was already established and used to someone else. After Carolyn started singing with the morning choir and I began selecting repertoire that was a better fit for the choir at the time, things changed. Our first hit was "On That Holy Mountain," in December 2011.

Slowly, new choir members began to show up, often recruited by current choir members. Every so often someone approaches me after a service to inquire about joining the choir. These approaches fall into two distinct categories: the humble and the exalted. The humble ask goes something like this: "Hi! I really like your choir. Is there an audition?" The exalted goes a little something like this: "I am a singer and have a lot of experience. You need me in your choir. Jesus said so. When can I have a solo?" I am working on opening myself up to the exalted approach, but I admit, I have more work to do on that.

Over the years the superstars-in-disguise who have joined our ranks continue to inspire me. James, bringing his Broadway audition book to me, asking if he could audition for the choir; Theresa offering to sing alto after Denise moved to California; Robert mentioning that he'd like to rap; Kristofer wanting to know if a classically trained voice would fit in… We all have special skills: Dana for Disney, Aaron for when we need to cry, Carolyn for when we need to not cry; Alva and Philip, the only two who have been with the choir longer than I, with their wondrous musicianship and unrivaled dedication. Monté for the sass, Michel for the style, Linda for her courage, Samantha and Matteo for the power and the range of their voices, Colleen for discipline and fire. The newbies— Crys, Sylvester, and Thomas—proving their value every time they tap dance, or sing a punk song, or play the cello.

I make lists all the time. Songs we can do with little preparation? ("Down By The Riverside," for instance); songs about courage? ("Brave"; "Don't Let It Break Your Heart"); social justice? ("Eyes On The Prize"), love, death, anger, joy; the list is long. Balancing the demands for new repertoire with demands for familiarity and tradition is part of the job.

We are often at our best under pressure. On February 7th of this year, we sang "Fantasy," four days after the passing of Maurice White. The song is complicated, and we focused hard as we sang, "Our voices will ring together / Until the twelfth of never / We all will live love forever, as one…."

The Query Quarterly/*Spring 2016*

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MCCNY
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK

MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 28 nations. The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, Moderator

An Easter Message from Our Pastor:

Holy Week and Easter 2015

"We are one, after all, you and I; together we suffer, together exist, and forever will recreate each other."

—Pierre Teilhard de Chardin

Dear friends~

As we prepare to celebrate another Holy Week and Easter together, I find myself pondering this quote from a man who, educated as a Jesuit priest, wore many hats including that of a paleontologist, geologist and philosopher. In many ways he embodied St. Paul's dream of being all things to all people—a seemingly insurmountable goal in a world today locked in mortal combat around race and class, ethnic origin and gender identity, religious persuasion and the many divergent ways our lives are oriented—"We are one...and forever will recreate each other."

I find myself wondering this holy season how front-page pictures of a drowned 3-year-old refugee from Syria, Aylan Kurdi, will recreate us. Over four million of his fellow countryfolk have fled the war and violence of their homeland—sometimes to a welcome shoreline; often times not.

How will the marchers chanting "Black Lives Matter" and those resisting that prophetic call change us, make us different or better?

Twenty-one trans women were targeted and killed last year in the United States alone. Did their living or their dying create in us a new and right spirit, to use the language of the Psalmist?

Easter is supposed to be a time of joy, when we celebrate the Good News of Jesus' Resurrection and the hope his victory over death extends to all, and I want to celebrate that Good News. And to do that, I cannot skip over all that led to that victory—a victory that, as de Chardin suggests, forever changes us.

As we move from Palm Sunday through Holy Week and into Easter, we will read about joyful crowds throwing their cloaks at Jesus' feet and others plotting his demise; about a prophet who trusts that no matter what happens he shall not be put to shame; and a disciple who loses himself in sorrow and betrayal. We will mark the stations of the cross as both historical and present realities, and proclaim that our heritage—all we have survived—is our power. An angel will ask the probing question, "Why look for the living among the dead?" and Peter will preach about the peace that belongs to all of us, because God has no favorites. And what all of this says to me is that Jesus had good things in his life and some really terrible things, and none of that altered God's love or will for good prevailing. And once he got that—spiritually got it—he was changed/recreated more fully in the image of the One who created all of us and pronounced us good, though often we fall short of the glory of God.

And maybe all of this is my way of saying~the Resurrection is not a consolation prize to make up for life's suffering or challenges. It's who we become, here and now, and who we forever remain, when we go through all we go through holding to the truth that God shows no partiality~together we exist, as de Chardin put it~and is with all of us all the time, working on the side of our re-creation. That's the hope I cling to, and the hope I pray you will join me in celebrating as we mark "A Year of Fresh Beginnings" at MCCNY.

With love,

The Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner

The QUERY

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Sunday Worship Services at 9 a.m. (traditional)
11 a.m. (celebration), and 7 p.m. (praise & worship)

On TV in Manhattan: Sundays 1:30 p.m.,
Time Warner channel 1997, RCN channel 84,
and FIOS channel 35

Letter from the Editor:

Dear friends,

When I'm in a funk, cute animal videos are a welcome distraction. I saw one the other day of a racoon in a hollowed-out tree trunk. In the video, you can see a person's hand in the corner, holding up a little piece of food. Slowly and delicately, the racoon inches its own tiny hands forward to grab the food. When he gets it, his ears wiggle in triumph, and you can tell that everyone—the person holding the food, the racoon, the viewer—has just experienced a risk being taken and has been made better for it.

It makes me think about how difficult it is to be vulnerable, to risk rejection, to express love not knowing what the outcome will be. It's a terrifying thing to make yourself soft and prepare for contact. For me, it is the story of Jesus, who loved and kept on loving despite everything, even when to love meant to bear a target on his back. I also see it in the woman who annointed Jesus with oil—who ventured to express love so openly and physically when surrounded by men who didn't want her there and who en masse could have overpowered her at any minute. I see many people practicing this same vulnerability on each other's behalf as they face horrible misogyny and racism this election season. They put themselves in harm's way in order to continue the expression of love: the thing that truly, urgently matters.

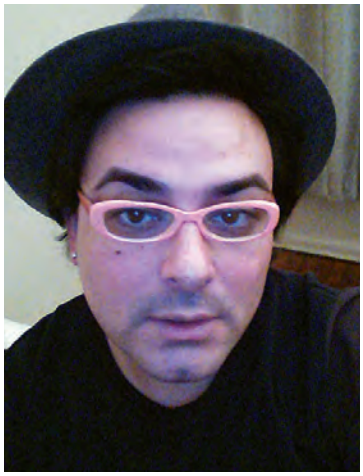
This Easter, I pray that I can align myself with these examples, knowing that moving towards vulnerability is the work of a lifetime, and the collective work that begets deep connection and profound change. This is, I think, the hope of the resurrection story. I pray that we can feel it this Easter.

With Love,

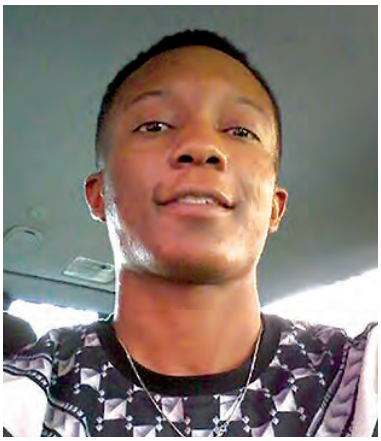
Frances Wood

Volunteer Spotlight *by Crys O'Neill*

The Sylvia Rivera food pantry at MCCNY Charities feeds three to four hundred people a month between snack bags and grocery distributions. To make running the pantry possible, we have several fantastic volunteers who work diligently to feed our community. Here's a little about two of our newest volunteers!



Alexis Pampillon: "I am originally from Argentina. I got my BA in political science and public administration. I love to work in human services. I have worked in substance abuse and HIV/HVC for about five years. I greatly admire Sylvia Rivera. I admire her courage and legacy. I heard about the church through a youtube documentary and have been coming for about two months. I love the teamwork, especially you, Crys. I'm blessed to work with my LGBTQ community!"



Channing Powers: "I attended high school in Washingtonville, NY. I found out about MCCNY by doing a Google search for an LGBTQI-inclusive church and started volunteering in the food pantry on March 8th. My favorite thing about volunteering with MCCNY Charities is helping others and working with Crys."

If reading this has enticed you to join the ranks of these lovely people, send me an email! We are always welcoming new volunteers! crystal.danarae@gmail.com

Pride Season is Volunteer Season at MCCNY *by Mike Easterling*

MCCNY got a jump-start on our Pride volunteering with a visit from an alternative spring break group from Simpson College in Indianola, Iowa *(pictured at left)*. The group of nine painted the stairwell and the upstairs bathroom, helped organize the gallery, and sat down with MCCNY staff to learn more about the church. Many thanks to them for their help!

Pride Month is an awesome time of outreach and activity for MCCNY and we can only accomplish everything we do with the help of volunteers! We will need volunteers in the office to help prepare God Made Me Queer stickers and postcards, outreach volunteers to represent MCCNY at the Brooklyn and Queens Pride marches, and other volunteers to help with the many events of Pride. If you are interested in helping out during June, email me at mike@mccny.org

Speaking of volunteers...We love you!

Stewardship Update *by Mike Easterling*

Recurring Giving

With 2016 still fresh and spring right around the corner, now is a great time to sign up for recurring giving. If you made a pledge for giving in 2016 or not, now is an awesome time to sign up for recurring giving through a credit or debit card! Giving this way assures your donation makes it to MCCNY even if you can't make it to MCCNY in person. Set up your giving today by visiting www.easytithe.com/MCCNY

There's an envelope in my Query...

Indeed there is! As you read this Query and see all the awesome things going on at MCCNY, from our choir to our services and programming, perhaps you will find yourself wanting to make a special donation. You can use these envelopes to make a donation to help support the work of MCCNY.

MCCNY Charities Holiday Party

MCCNY Charities staff and volunteers got to be elves for a day at the annual Sylvia Rivera Food Pantry Holiday Party. Held on December 17th, the party included music, food, and the highlight of the afternoon: presents! Thanks to our generous donors, we were able to give away over 100 gifts, and each child left with at least three new toys. Many of the children have been coming to the party for years, and we were so happy to see their smiling faces again. Thank you to everyone who helped make the holidays brighter for our kids!

YAM Greets LGBT Youth from Japan *by Jasmine Shovlin*

On Sunday, March 13th, MCCNY had the pleasure of hosting a group of young adults from LGBT Youth Japan. They thoroughly enjoyed the celebration service, hospitality hour and speaking with Bishop Pat about LGBT visibility and activism in the United States. After their meeting, the Young Adult Ministry invited the group of students to the Skylight Diner for food and conversation. We exchanged our personal stories about homophobia and transphobia and how that has shaped our relationships with families, friends, and colleagues. We also talked about our own journeys with faith and spirituality (or lack thereof) as queer and trans people and how these experiences led us to MCCNY. Most of our conversations centered around invisibility and how that has affected their lives and ability to create social change as LGBT people in Japan.

Easter Offering for Global Justice!

On Easter Sunday, MCCNY will join with other MCCs in collecting a special offering to support the critical work of the Global Justice Institute. Led by our own Bishop Pat Bumgardner, the Global Justice Institute carries out our commitment to justice by working alongside marginalized people around the world to build inclusive, supportive communities for all.

Last year, your generous Easter Offerings empowered the Global Justice Institute to work with grassroots organizations to:

- Build and open a community center in Mtito Andei, Kenya to create safe space for LGBTQI people and hosted a diverse audience of 40 people to have the first open discussion in that region on sexuality and gender identity;
- Provide permanent running water for the center and for future cultivation of the land in Mtito Andei;
- Host a safe sex workshop in Kenya for 30 individuals who trade sex for survival;
- Continue to strengthen partnership with Casabierta in Costa Rica, serving LGBTQI asylum seekers and sheltering marginalized populations and working to reintegrate clients into society;
- Participate in Vietnam's first LGBT Pride March.

Our goals for 2016 include:

- Working with activists on the ground in Central Asia and Malawi to create and expand safe spaces and housing for targeted LGBTQI people;
- Strengthening and expanding our programming reach at our satellite location of GJI in Kenya;
- Collaborating with HIV/AIDS activists in Cuba;
- Expanding partnerships between local MCCs and GJI projects.

By participating in the Easter Offering for Global Justice you are advancing the work of the Global Justice Institute at a time when the support is needed globally more than ever! Please prayerfully consider giving this year.

Updates from The Global Justice Institute *by Frances Wood*

The past several months have been a busy time for the Global Justice Institute. GJI was recently contacted by a clergyperson in Malawi about the plight of a gay couple being targetted by the government. The couple has been arrested several times and has been unable to re-establish their lives and find work. GJI is currently providing funds to hide them in a safe location until a further plan can be made for resettling them outside of Malawi.

GJI also continues to serve as a fiscal conduit for Rainbow Railroad in Toronto. "Rainbow Railroad is like an underground railroad: it helps people, largely from Africa, not only make safe passage into Canada but navigate legally living there and finding a place to live and a job," said Bishop Pat. To this end, GJI has collaborated with Rev. Brent Hawkes and MCC Toronto's Refugee and Immigration Project. MCC Toronto has done incredible work with Rainbow Railroad and the Canadian government, who has recognized them as an offical resettlement partner.

GJI has identified Costa Rica as a relatively safe country where Central American refugees might resettle without leaving the region. The government of Costa Rica is very open to working with advocates to increase the number of refugees coming into the country. GJI has provided funding to pay for office space for Casabierta, a non-profit in Costa Rica working on this project. GJI is also tentatively planning a trip to Cuba this year to work with HIV/AIDS groups there.

No matter the country, GJI focuses on working with people on the ground to identify the community's needs rather than proposing strategies from the top-down. "It's work that requires commitment," says Bishop Pat. "That kind of change takes longer but is more sustainable because for the people on the ground, it is their vision and they have invested in it."

Helping LGBTQI Women Get Where They Need to Go *by Frances Wood*

Say you are a young lesbian, bisexual, or transgender woman and you are homeless. You finally get called for a job interview but you don't have the money to buy a Metrocard. For many youth, the path to work, a medical appointment, or a college class might include jumping the turnstiles, which can lead to transit tickets and desk warrants that set them back even further. Many non-profits like MCCNY Charities, Inc. struggle to maintain funding for Metrocards—funding that helps minimize the likelihood that youth with have to interact with law enforcement while traveling. Thanks to the Bee Winkler Weinstein Fund of Stonewall Community Foundation, it just got a little easier for MCCNY Charities, Inc. to help LGBTQI women safely get where they need to go.

MCCNY Charities, Inc. was the recipient of a block grant to purchase roundtrip Metrocards for women staying at Sylvia's Place. The Fund was created in honor of Bee Winkler Weinstein by her daughter, Dava Weinstein, and Dava's partner, Dorothy Calvani, the Fund's lead donors. The Fund seeks to provide funds to LGBTQI women whose families refuse to support them due to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.

"It is so important to make sure that our youth have the resources they need to get to potentially life-changing appointments," said Charities Executive Director William Morán-Berberena. "What would any of us do without a Metrocard? We are grateful to Bee's Fund for realizing the gap in funding for the everyday needs of youth, and for providing this grant to us to make sure these needs get met."

And what about the youth of Sylvia's Place who do not identify as women? This grant will help us leverage additional support from other funders to make sure that every youth staying in the shelter has access to Metrocards in order to get to critical appointments. We will be working on securing this funding in the year ahead!

Pamper Party Provides New Looks and More *by Kristen Lovell and Jonathan Gordon*

For the past several months, Sylvia's Place has hosted an evening of beauty and resource-sharing facilitated by volunteers from the organization Trans Beauty Clinic. Led by Brigitte, who has worked with a long list of celebrities from Beyoncé to Mick Jagger, a team of six makeup and hair experts from Trans Beauty Clinic have provided hair and makeup demonstrations to attendees, as well as giving away gift bags of beauty products. The team from Trans Beauty Clinic includes both transgender and non-transgender artists. At the most recent pamper party, Trans Beauty Clinic services were accompanied by free HIV testing provided by MCCNY Charities and STI screening and Medicaid enrollment provided by APICHA. Representatives from CK Life and Housing Works shared information about their clinic services for the trans community.

Plans are underway for the next Pamper Party in May, which will aim to be more inclusive of transgender men, providing grooming services and product samples. The next party will also emphasize community-building by setting aside time for participants to talk about their experiences and share resources with one another. MCCNY Homeless Youth Services social worker Jonathan Gordon and HIV testing coordinator Kristen Lovell are also discussing the possibility of having a week focused solely on services for the transgender community, with evenings set aside for the Trans Beauty Clinic, community health providers, legal services, and advocacy organizations. For more information about upcoming MCCNY Charities events for the transgender community, please contact Kristen Lovell at kristen@mccny.org

MCCNY To Host New Men's Therapy Group

Beginning on April 5th, MCCNY will host an 8-week Men's Therapy Group focused on exploring relationships. The group will meet on Tuesdays at 7:45 p.m. and is free and open to all self-identified men. We spoke with the group's facilitator Melissa King *(pictured below)* to find out more about what participants can expect from the group therapy process.

Tell us a little bit about your background. What drew you to the idea of forming the Men's Group at MCCNY?

Prior to becoming a psychotherapist, I was an audio engineer who moved to NYC in my early 20s to study dance. Soon after, I trained to become a health coach and began working with clients around healthy eating, body image, and self-esteem. I loved the work, but I felt limited. Some of my clients needed help with concerns such as anxiety and depression, and I always had to refer them out. So finally I got the courage to go back to school. I completed my master's degree in clinical mental health counseling at St. John's University and right after graduation I was hired to provide psychotherapy in NYC public STD clinics. I have cared about sexual health for a long time and have been leading a support group for individuals diagnosed with genital herpes for many years. At the clinics, most of my clients were gay and bisexual men. Most of them shared stories of isolation and loneliness due to their sexuality, conflict around faith—especially Christian faith—and a desire for deeper connection but a struggle to believe they could find it. I felt really privileged to provide a safe space for individuals to share their stories for the first time and begin to deconstruct negative messages and think about how to develop a healthier relationship with themselves and others. As a heterosexual woman, I think I was really naïve, thinking that because there is such a strong history of LGBTQ activism here in NYC and places to access community, that gay men in the city didn't have to struggle with these things.

I come from a conservative evangelical Christian background. In my early 20s I began to go through my own experience of questioning faith and feeling disenchanted with broken promises and hypocrisy in the church. But I still felt a close connection with God and the story of Jesus and deeply desired to find a way to navigate and redefine my faith. I learned a lot over those years of struggling with faith and I think it was the combination of this along with my psychotherapy training that allowed me to help so many of my clients at the clinics.

So the desire to offer the men's group at MCCNY has come from an intersection between my faith, a love I've developed for this community, and a history of fighting issues related to shame and stigma around sexuality. I also love to facilitate groups and think that groups provide a very unique and powerful experience of healing.

What can participants expect to experience as part of the group? Is there anything they should know before registering?

The group will be limited to 8 individuals, so it will be an intimate setting. It will be important to commit to the full 8 sessions. Also, it's better to register early so I can schedule a time to meet with each individual one-on-one before the group starts. I really value getting to know participants a bit before the group begins.

Sometimes people feel a little nervous about trying something like this out. It can be scary to really open up to others. But after leading groups for many years, I've found that most people end up feeling surprised by how valuable the experience turns out to be. Those who are interested in this group are welcome to schedule a time to meet with me to explore their interest and ask questions, even if they aren't yet sure about joining.

How will the book* Blue Boy *help shape the trajectory of the group discussions?

Blue Boy is a refreshing and adventurous fictional story based on a young boy who finds joy in things that don't fall within traditional expectations for a Hindu boy growing up in Cincinnati. He has to navigate the complexities of budding adolescence, his desire for self-expression, and the limits his parents and peers place on him due to his expected gender role. The author, Rakesh Satyal, has done a beautiful job of demonstrating all of these nuances and allowing the main character's adolescence to develop organically. The book is full of laughs while also taking on serious subjects such as family dynamics, bullying, gender, sexual orientation, and belonging.

Is there anything else you'd like to add that you think would be helpful to someone interested in joining the group?

I think the most valuable thing that comes out of group therapy is that we get to learn a lot about ourselves and the way we experience and interact in relationships. The experiences in the group often teach us about our experiences outside of the group. Besides discussion topics, there will also be time each week for participants to share what's going on in their lives now. This really creates an environment where we can develop empathy for each other, provide healing to each other, and have an opportunity, in a safe and gentle space, to hear reflections and feedback (if desired) that you may not get to receive in situations outside of the group.

Please contact Melissa King at (917) 689-6530 or melissa@myheartdances.com no later than April 1st for more information or to sign up.

HOLY WEEK and Easter

"A Year of Fresh Beginnings!"

Holy Thursday, March 24th: 7pm Taize Service
Rev. Dr. Edgard Francisco Danielsen-Morales and John Fischer

Good Friday, March 25th: 7pm Stations of the Cross
Choral Reading of the Passion/Lavender Light Gospel Choir/The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, preaching

Holy Saturday, March 26th:
3pm Easter Awards Banquet
Union Theological Seminary

7pm Easter Vigil Liturgy
Reading of Salvation History and Lighting of the New Fire/The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, preaching

Easter Sunday, March 27th: 11am Service of the Resurrection!
One Service only! Gala Reception! The Rev. Elder Nancy Wilson, preaching!
Special Offering received to support the Global Justice Institute

We Must Have Each Other's Backs

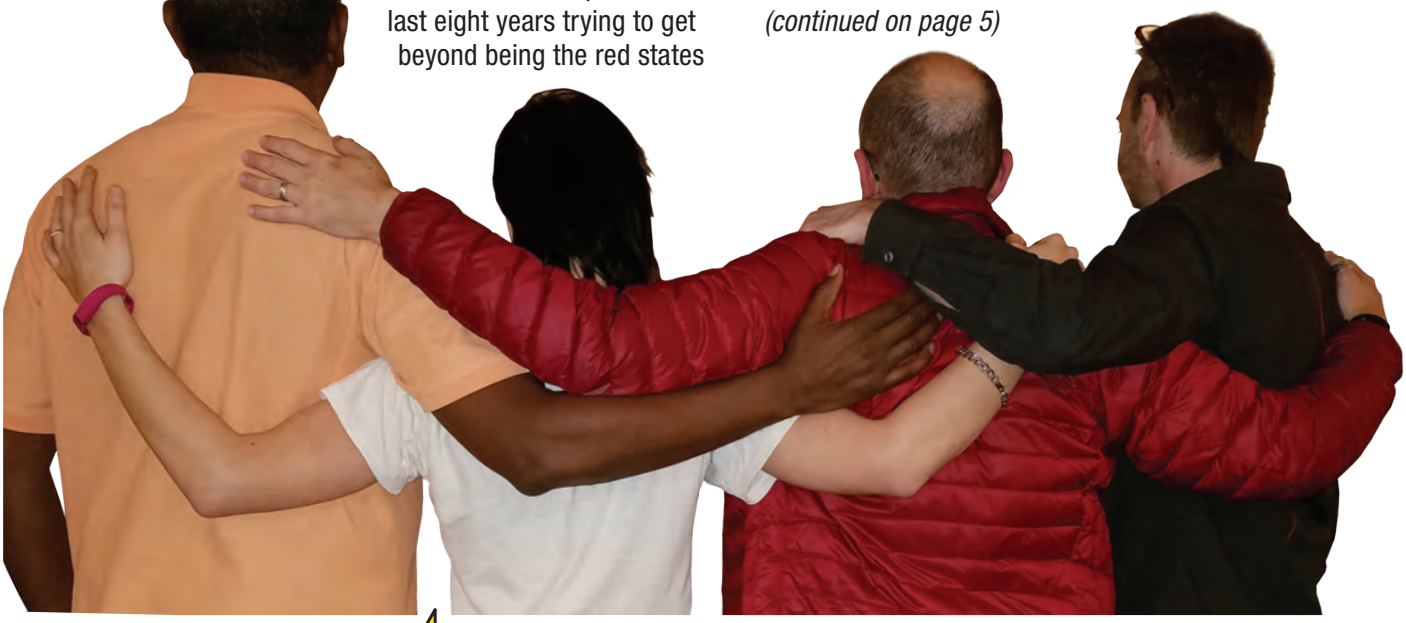
The following is an excerpt from a speech the Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner delivered at a ceremony honoring Rev. Gale Jones on December 10th.

When I was in Cuba about a month ago, as I stepped off the plane, the first thing the folks meeting me said was "what happened?"—meaning in our national election—and the second thing was: "The United States is the laughingstock of the world."

There is a sense in which I feel like I don't know what happened—how could a system designed to give slaveholders more power in this country still be in place and used to override the popular vote? There is another sense in which I am very clear about what happened. What happened is that a system originally designed to give slaveholders more power prevailed. And so a race-baiter, a man who refused to denounce the KKK, a chronic liar, tax evader, and sexual predator, a misogynist who has promised to dismantle health care and leave at least 20 million people with no reasonable alternative, promised to target Muslim Americans for surveillance, promised to build a wall on the border with Mexico and deport human beings to certain danger and suffering, promised to ignore the Geneva Conventions and use heinous forms of torture—and maybe even employ the nuclear option—became President of a nation that had spent the last eight years trying to get beyond being the red states and the blue states, to become the United States—a nation that, though still deeply mired in racial animosity and unexamined bigotry, saw a President publicly mourn the loss of a young black child in a hoodie, as if he were his own, and so began the process of self-examination. A nation that sent a woman into some of the most violent and hostile places on the face of the earth, to represent us as Secretary of State; a woman who stood before the United Nations in Geneva to declare simply, eloquently, and unequivocally ~ "gay rights are human rights."

What happened was what happens when you don't deal with an open wound ~ when black lives matter so little that an African-American man running away from a white law enforcement officer can be shot in the back and killed under the auspices of self-defense. When women are so disenfranchised that men can seriously propose criminalization as a response to birth control choices. When children in North Carolina can be told they can carry mace to school to use in case a trans child enters the bathroom ~ and the man who will apparently hold the seat of Vice President proposes that trans people simply use the bathroom before leaving home as a solution. Over 400 thousand people have been injured or killed with firearms in this country since the Sandy Hook massacre, and we have no serious gun control legislation ~ and, in fact, proposals are on the table to make "open carry" permits national.

(continued on page 5)



MCCNY
METROPOLITAN COMMUNITY CHURCH OF NEW YORK
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MCCNY is a member of Metropolitan Community Churches, a global movement of faith with congregations in 28 nations. The Rev. Rachelle Brown, Interim Moderator

A Christmas Message from Our Pastor

There will be no gloom for her that was in anguish….
In the latter time, God will make glorious the way of the sea….
The people who walked without light, have seen a great light….
~ Isaiah 9

"Aleppo's Faces Beckon to Us, to Little Avail"—"Philippines' President Boasts of Killings"—"Record Homelessness Hits a High Rent City"—"Terrorism Suspects had Mainstream Lives"—"Malaysian Dissident Loses Bid for Freedom"….

These are the headlines, my friends, that we fall asleep to every night, and that greet us with each morning's awakening.

As I write, I want—I think we all want and desperately need to find the hope in this season—the promise of gloom and gore lifted from us, and some light shining at the end of the long and dark tunnel much of 2016 was for many in our world.

I want some hope. So here it is: A child entered this world as it was/as it is some 2,000 years ago, championing love and goodness over greed and terror. A child was born to the tune of angels singing about peace in a world decidedly and doggedly enshrined in unrest and hostility.

"Christmas," writes Eugene Kennedy, "tells us that God entered the world as it is." Love thrives on the imperfection, he says.

That 10-year-old child, Yazmeen Kaimouz, already an orphan in Eastern Aleppo, broadcasting before a war-weary world with other orphans in tow, "We wish you get us out of here. We want to live like everybody else," holds our hope. Every parent who's ever worried for their child's future, like Mary and Joseph did, or had to flee a dangerous government as they did; everyone who's ever lived at the margins of what the world labels acceptable, as Jesus himself did—all of us, born into this world as it is, so ripe for love and mercy, care and generosity, are each other's best hope simply because we offer each other the chance to love the way God first loved us.

Hope, as we've quoted a priest named Ernest Ferlita saying, is what happens when love finds you. —So, what are any of us waiting for? Let love find you, so that the hope we all need right now can happen. Do something you don't normally do, just for love's sake.

*Buy an extra gift for a young person at Sylvia's or a child in the Food Pantry, even if the toy drive is over!

*Make a donation to a hospital that turns no one away and treats all children who are ill for free (they still exist!) or Doctors Without Borders or an organization that serves wounded veterans or one that shelters abandoned animals.

*Volunteer one Thursday morning downstairs on the first floor, and be amazed at how far a warm embrace and a few cans of food can go in creating goodwill among all.

Hope isn't lost, ever—even if sometimes we are. Get found by love this season and keep hope alive. Come home to the house love built almost 45 years ago and has sustained through thick and thin. That part inside you that really needs to find the promise of this season will be glad you did—and you just may find yourself singing with the angels, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and joy, goodwill and hope for all of us."

With love,

Rev. Elder Pat

Letter from the Editor

Dear Family,

The past month has been more disorienting and gut-wrenching than any I can remember. As someone who deeply loves Hillary Clinton and was so ready to share in her victory and to live in a country that she was guiding, I feel like the sinking feeling of the current reality will never end. As Les observed, it feels as though we have slipped into an alternate reality.

The night of the election, Les and I were at Hillary's rally at the Javits Center, and when the atmosphere got too foreboding to bear, we walked the two blocks to church, sat in the sanctuary, lit a candle, and prayed. It was a refuge when we desperately needed it.

Church is the place where I have learned that we are saved through relationships. I don't know exactly what the future holds, but I know that we have to challenge each other to be braver than we have ever been. Church is where I have gained the tools, the language, the faith to challenge bigotry, and where I am reminded, again and again, that Jesus said to turn the other cheek, which does not mean—as some would say—that we accept abuse, but instead that we stand up and face our challengers and demand to be treated as the children of God that we are. Now is the time to hold each other accountable to the standards set by Sylvia Rivera, who demanded that the movement for LGBTQI rights never, ever throw trans people—or any member of the community—under the bus in order for the rest to get ahead.

None of us has a completed playbook for what to do next, but I know, as Russian journalist Masha Gessen (who MCCNY honored at last years' Easter banquet, and whose words have been invaluable to me post-election) says, that we have to be willing to be outraged. "It is no fun to be the only hysterical person in the room," she writes, "prepare yourself." I look at coming to church as essential preparation, and as a way to hold myself to my promise to contribute to resistance with the skills that I have. For me, one of those skills is writing, and in the coming year I will hone this skill by going back to school. As a community bound by our commitment to diversity and justice, I believe we can devise a plan of concrete action that allows us to challenge bigotry, and to righteously turn the other cheek. That is what I will hope for this Christmas.

Frances Wood

The QUERY

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11 a.m. (celebration), and 5 p.m. (praise & worship)

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Time Warner channel 1997, RCN channel 84

Stewardship Update!

by Mike Easterling

Stuff the Stocking 2016!

MCCNY's annual end of the year fundraising campaign is back with the goal of raising $45,000 by January 8, 2017. Why $45,000? Well, MCCNY is celebrating its 45th anniversary on Epiphany Sunday and we are looking to go into our 45th year with steady footing. As of the writing of this column near the fourth Sunday in Advent we were half way to our goal! Help us reach our goal and support our mission and work by making a donation today with the envelope included in this Query or online by visiting www.easytithe.com/mccny Thank you for your generous support of MCCNY and this vital annual fundraiser.

Gratitude: At this time of the year, we are all thinking of what we are grateful for and I am particularly grateful for all who have volunteered or donated this year at MCCNY and MCCNY Charities. Without your support and generosity we would not be able to accomplish what we do and we are forever grateful. Thank you for an inspiring year of generosity and I look forward to sharing 2017 with you.

With an abundance of thanks and love, *Mike*

MCCNY spoke about stewardship and pledging this year through images and pictures. As a church family we discussed where we have been, where we are now, and where we are going. Through a journey series, testimonies, sermons, weekly announcements, and a wall of snapshots, MCCNY found new ways to discuss and reflect on stewardship and the role it plays in our lives and the life of our church. Stewardship month culminated in Pledge Sunday on November 20th where the clergy, pastoral staff, and board made public their intentions to pledge and support MCCNY before the congregation made their pledges for 2017. The Board of Directors prepared and served a pasta luncheon as a thank you for the outpouring of support for stewardship month and for a chance to come together and celebrate our blessings over a meal. Thank you to all MCCNYers who made pledges for 2017. It is not too late to make your pledge if you have not yet done so. Email me at mike@mccny.org to make arrangements.

Credit & Debit Card Giving has never been easier!

Options abound!

- ➤ Sign up for one time or recurring giving at www.easytithe.com/mccny
- ➤ Donate with just one swipe at our new giving kiosk located at the entrance to the sanctuary
- ➤ Donate by text message by sending any numerical amount to 646-681-7445
- ➤ Email Mike Easterling to have credit giving setup for you

Save the Date! Join Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner and Metropolitan Community Church of New York as we celebrate our 45th Anniversary on Epiphany Sunday, January 8, 2017! We will celebrate with services at 9 am, 11 am, and 5 pm. There will be a special anniversary luncheon at 12: 30 pm at The Houndstooth Pub, 520 Eighth Avenue between 36th and 37th streets. Come and share a meal and stories of our time together over the years. Tickets are $25 and scholarships are available. Please contact Mike Easterling at mike@mccny.org to reserve your spot today. Come and celebrate our 45 years as a church family!

The Faces of MCCNY

In September, MCCNY Charities welcomed a group of social work students from Universität Vechta in Lueneberg, Germany. MCCNY Charities has a long-standing relationship with the social work faculty at the university who coordinate a biannual trip to New York City with their students to learn about social services in the U.S. As always, the visit was warm and productive. Students toured the shelter and sat down with Charities staff to discuss LGBTQI youth homelessness. Thank you to Bettina Motschmann for coordinating another great visit, and for all the students and faculty that made the day so special.

Choir member Sylvester McCracken grooves on the saxophone during an 11 am service.

Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner serves food to guests during Community Dinner. The dinner is held the last Tuesday of every month at 5:30 pm on the ground floor, and all are welcome to join us!

MCCNY celebrated the diversity of sexual expression on Leather Sunday. The yearly service includes a procession of the flags of the Leather and Bear communities.

MCCNY marked World AIDS Day with an ecumenical service. The service included the lifting up of the names of those lost to AIDS and acknowledging the work that still needs to be done to end AIDS worldwide.

Longtime MCCNY member Tressie Carter was baptized on November 27th at the 11 am service. Congratulations, Tressie!

We Must Have Each Other's Backs

by the Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner

We may not know who the next White House resident really is, since he seems to change his presented position more frequently than ~ what ~ a hummingbird flaps its wings in 60 seconds or a chameleon changes colors going from dirt to grass. But this we do know: it is a very big mistake not to take what is being said and proposed seriously ~ the *New York Times* is on record as saying some 80 or so years ago in the 1930s that Adolf Hitler's stance on Jewish people—his anti-Semitism—was all puff. And then 6 million people, not to mention the Roma and the Queers and the political dissidents, died. And a world went to war. And apparently learned very little, as Germany prepares once again to ban face-coverings of certain women of faith and Russia rattles its sabers on the Ukrainian border and a Syrian demagogue kills, bombs, and gasses his own people.

We all know what the issues are and how urgent the moment is ~ the question is: what shall we do? And before we ask ourselves what is the right or wrong thing to do, ask this: what's the moral thing to do? The first thing morality demands we all must do is renounce denial and escapism ~ "I can't watch the news anymore," so many people have said to me. But Jesus's command at advent is: watch! Keep awake! All it takes, as they say, for evil to win is for good people to do nothing. Pay attention to what is going on ~ don't let rudeness, racist jokes, off-color remarks go unchallenged. Act up! Fight back! That was the mantra that mobilized a generation and saved many of the lives in this room. None of us can afford the luxury of zoning out.

Make the connections. Build alliances. If we made one mistake in the early days of AIDS, it was allowing ourselves to be categorized as a gay movement. Much, much too late we included the need for culturally appropriate education and care—both domestically and internationally—and never did we really solve or address the global reality of what we face, which is why 39 million people still died last year of a disease we could have under control if the fight to end AIDS was universal and included things like clean water and needle exchange programs instead of pogroms, and condoms instead of castigation and all that goes with the dehumanization of women.

Care about things like free press. ~ 40 journalists have been killed this year—and many others sit in jail cells for reporting what powerful leaders did not want people to know. ~ You may not think that is a problem here, but there is no law that says the White House must hold pres briefings and we have already seen how the man-who-would-be-king treats those who disagree with him or picture him in a less-than-favorable light. Freedom of the press is a defense against xenophobia, against warmongering, against Queer-bashing. Information empowers us. 60% of the adults in this country get their "news" from the internet, which means that much of what they are reading is fake—and designed only to increase the number of hits to a site ~ it is driven by profit, not truth.

Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free, said the prophet we've given our lives to.

A patriot, said William Sloane Coffin, is someone willing to have a lover's quarrel with their country. Love is not a sentiment; it is a way of life ~ a way that, as the Pope has said, builds bridges not walls; a way that understands mercy and compassion as the foundation of greatness.

Social action in the post-electoral context will have to take seriously the original motto of this country: *e pluribus unum*/out of many one—will have to take seriously the truth of King's admonition that we live together or we die together.

And we do not live together by compromising our beliefs in human equality and the value, dignity, and worth of each life. Looking for the good we can do in an evil system is not the way of the cross that Jesus called us to embrace. Compromise is not the answer. ~ Being willing to stand against what dehumanizes some while lifting up others and standing for what elevates us all is what Jesus gave his life for. *Black lives matter* must become the rallying cry for every person of conscience and good will. The dismantling of the prison-industrial complex, which President Obama took steps to initiate, must become a Queer rights issue. Social justice in the post-electoral climate must become intersectional ~ we must have each other's backs.

The foolish person built a house upon the sand, and the wise upon rock, the Gospel we've read and reverence says.

And most people take "rock" to mean Jesus the Christ—but here's the thing ~ Jesus himself will say, "It's not those who say to me 'Lord, Lord,' who will enter the reign of heaven, but those who hear the word of God and do it."

To profess the faith in Christ that you and I share is to build our lives, our nation, and our world on the solid rock of the values and principles and core beliefs he taught and practiced—beliefs and practices that left no room for complacency and called everyone to the practice of solidarity. Standing Rock is our example today ~ people of many tribes and cultures digging in for what they really believe in.

We are not the people from whom this nation needs to be recovered. We ~ Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Sikhs, Muslims, atheists and agnostics, black, white, Latinx, Asian, old and young, intersex, trans, Queer and straight, rich, poor and barely making it, housed and homeless, healthy and struggling to regain health—are the people to whom this country belongs. That statue at the end of Manhattan still means something—and its clarion call is to stand together.

We, our lives, the safety of our children in schools (whether the presenting issue is the public education to prison pipeline and policing of kindergartners or bullying of gay kids and excluding trans children from full participation), our safety in public places like bathrooms are not "boutique issues," but Human Rights issues, and therefore related to dismantling the gun lobby, restoring community-based policing practices, building grocery stores with fresh produce not waste disposal facilities in underserved communities, increasing the number of sanctuary cities, protecting free speech, upholding the rights of workers to organize, and preserving the Affordable Care Act— the only option for health care that 20 million of us have.

What will protect and serve and make a way out of no way for a future bright with promise for all of us is standing together for the things that protect and serve us all. Social activism in the post-electoral era is about solidarity ~ the moral imperative of the Gospel we preach and have given our lives to.

News from MCCNY Charities *by Frances Wood*

You're Making Magic Happen!

Your generosity is making this holiday season a very special one for the youth of Sylvia's Place! This year, MCCNY Charities' staff invited the community to help us make our holiday "goals" a reality. We introduced these goals by e-mail and community members were encouraged to help out in the ways they could. Goal #1 was to replace the shelter refrigerator. The fridge we have used for years recently broke and the youth had nowhere to store their snacks and beverages. Nine minutes after sending the e-mail, we received the funds to purchase the refrigerator!

For Goal #2, we invited individuals to fill the youth's holiday stockings by purchasing items from our Target wish list. Our stalwart supporters from the online community "Knitters for Sylvia's" had already crafted handmade stockings for the youth, we just needed to fill them! From gift cards to Harry Potter socks to razors and makeup, you came through in a big way! Within a week of asking for your help, nearly every item on the list had been purchased.

Goal #3 was a bit more physical. We scheduled a "sprucing up" day at Sylvia's Place on Sunday, December 18th and asked you to volunteer to paint and clean the pantry space. The result was a phenomenal effort by volunteers, including members of MCCNY's Young Adult Meetup group, resulting in newly painted walls in the shelter and front bathroom!

Goal #4 is an invitation to become a Fabuloso Fairy, MTA Mermaid, or Laundry Leprechaun! By committing to make a monthly donation to MCCNY Charities you can help us keep the shelter clean ($10), provide metrocards for youth ($22), or ensure the youth have clean laundry ($60). To keep the magic of the season going in 2017, e-mail Frances at frances@mccny.org to find out how you can sign up or to learn about other ways you can help the Charities continue to provide a safe space for homeless LGBTQI youth! Thanks to everyone who has made this our most joyful holiday season yet!

GJI Builds Bridges in Cuba

by Frances Wood

The lifting of the travel ban between the U.S. and Cuba has opened up exciting potential partnerships between the Global Justice Institute and Human Rights groups on the island. With the opening of Cuba's borders has come an influx of fundamentalist missionaries, making it that much more important to support groups on the ground who are inclusive and committed to sharing God's love for all people. In November, Rev. Elder Pat Bumgardner traveled to Matanzas, Cuba to meet with a congregation that is in the process of becoming an MCC. Matanzas is located about an hour and a half outside of Havana and, like the rest of Cuba, is characterized by the cars and architecture of the 1950s—a reminder of the history of this community.

Despite years of government-sanctioned persecution of LGBTQI people—including internment, compulsory psychological testing, and forced labor—Cuba is home to a number of ambitious LGBTQI and HIV/AIDS organizations. The congregation in Matanzas not only serves as an affirming spiritual center, but also works directly with a local organization caring for orphans with HIV/AIDS. GJI plans to partner with the congregation to purchase a house that will serve as a meeting place for the church and a hub for community organizing.

Matanzas is also home to an ecumenical seminary that could offer interesting opportunities for potential MCC clergy. The seminary could serve as a training ground for those aspiring clergy members in Central America who are barred from the more conservative seminaries in their home countries and might also provide a route to a low-cost Masters of Divinity for those from the U.S. who are fluent in Spanish or who are willing to learn the language.

GJI and MCC's work in Cuba is not limited to the projects in Matanzas. On December 10th—International Human Rights Day—Rev. Robert Griffin represented GJI at the opening service of the first MCC in Havana.

(Photo by Iris Rodriguez)

It remains to be seen, said Rev. Pat, what effect the influx of investors and the influence of U.S. politics will have on the people and organizations in Cuba, where the income provided by the government to each citizen averages $25 a month (though most supplement this income with the tips they receive from tourism jobs), education through college is free, and compliance with medical visits is government-enforced.

Despite these differences between Cuba and the U.S., Rev. Pat received a warm welcome, and met many Cubans who expressed a kind of pan-American unity not often voiced in the United States. The belief, said Rev. Pat is that "America (including Central, South, and North) is a people who have been separated by political ambitions and governments, but that we really belong together as one." Many people she met expressed deep concern about the recent election, to which Rev. Pat responded: "this election could easily jeopardize the last 40 years of work."

"In one way they were shocked that I said that," she said, "but as a people who have themselves been struggling for the past 40 years, there was a sense in which they got it."

Lamenting and Hoping: Programming in the New Year

by Rev. Edgard Francisco Danielsen-Morales

In the midst of the political turmoil in the USA, wars and famine and destruction around the world, and the rise of neoliberalism and supremacy ideologies that destroy the fabric of our humanness, it is important for us to remain faithful to the values of the commonwealth of God: All of God's creation is beloved by God (reality) and affected by racism, classism, transphobia, and other "isms" (ideologies) within our community and in the world. In addition, we are called to see reality as it is, and use words and images that convey our pain and hurt and fear, i.e. the walls of denial must come down. Finally, we are called to hope, a hope upon which new generations will be able to stand, or as Reinhold Niebuhr beautifully expresses: "nothing that is worthy takes one lifetime to accomplish, therefore we must be saved by hope."

There are a few opportunities this new year to learn how to become prophets in our communities: to acknowledge reality, to lament, to hope.

On Sunday, January 15, our own Dr. Jules Netherland will help us explore "Masculinities." On Sunday, February 26th, The Rev. Miller Hoffman from Open Door MCC in Maryland will lead a workshop on "Intimacy, Sex, and Consent." On Sunday, March 12th, The Rev. Marie Alford-Harkey, from the Religious Institute in Connecticut will help us explore the forgotten "b": bisexuality. Finally, on a date to be announced later, queer theologian Robyn Henderson-Espinoza from the Pacific School of Religion in California will be exploring the theme of "Belonging in this Post-Election Time." All these Sunday Conversations happen at 12:30 pm.

In addition to the aforementioned Sunday Conversations, in our Bible Study each Tuesday at 6 pm, we are reading and reflecting on the Gospel of Mark through the lens of the prophetic task: to acknowledge reality, to lament, to hope. The Jesus of Mark destroys ideologies (separation, exclusion), the Jesus of Mark does not deny the forces working against the reign of God, the Jesus of Mark holds onto the hope that freedom is coming. Each week we take only a few verses at a time and try to imagine the first communities that heard this gospel and how they were impacted by the good news, then we try to imagine what Mark's story is telling us in the 21st century.

Reflecting on the Journey to Ordination

by Robert Daniel Arnau

Imagine yourself in a train that is—somehow—racing along the edge of a narrow mountain at a gazillion miles per hour. The train cars are bumping into every mountain point and scraping along the sides of the jagged façade but the train manages to keep you chugging along. You are filled with adrenaline but you are also scared out of your mind ("mind" wasn't my first choice to use, just saying) because you know you have a responsibility to maintain this train on the track. You think you can do it but you are not totally sure. The only thing you hold on to is the fact that whoever put you in charge of driving this train in the first place knows you can accomplish the task. That, my dear friends, is how I feel as a Candidate for Ministry.

Everyone has a different journey when they go through candidacy so I am not, in any way, generalizing the experience. For me, however, there is a sense of wonder and anxiety. I feel called to the ministry but, like all new things, there are moments where I find myself asking God "Hey, are you sure you got the right dude?" I mean, there is so much in this world that has a blanket of need covering it. There is so much work to do and I wonder: am I equipped for it? But then I come across one person—just one—in a week who needs something: advice, an ear, a shoulder, a compassionate hug. And when I can be used by God and deliver the essence of God—love—to someone in need and, most importantly, they walk away comforted, that is when I realize that I am right where I need to be.

Being a Candidate for Ministry in my home church is quite an experience. I am involved in the choir and music ministry but I have also been exposed to the challenges of, what they call "parish" life. I have interacted and bonded with many different people on different levels, and I have seen firsthand MCCNY's work and the need for us to continue its mission. Part of my duties as a candidate is to create a project, so I am working on a blog for the church that can get the message out online of what we are truly about. I want to fill it with pictures and videos, messages from our services and from the testimonies of people in the congregation in order to increase our online presence. We are a faith community of diverse people and I want the world to see that. MCCNY's mission is not over. We are destined to fill this community—and all communities—with compassion and hope. It's all about putting the passion of the message of the Gospel into action; putting the message of Jesus into work. As long as I am on this journey towards ordination and God is by my side, I promise to do just that.

Celebrate Christmas and Kwanzaa with MCCNY

Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 24
7pm Celebration
"Silent Night" by Candlelight
Annual Holiday Party!

Christmas Day

Sunday, December 25
11am Celebration only
Service of Lessons & Carols
Annual Holiday Brunch!

Kwanzaa Sunday

Sunday, January 1st
11am Celebration only
Lighting of the Kwanzaa Candles